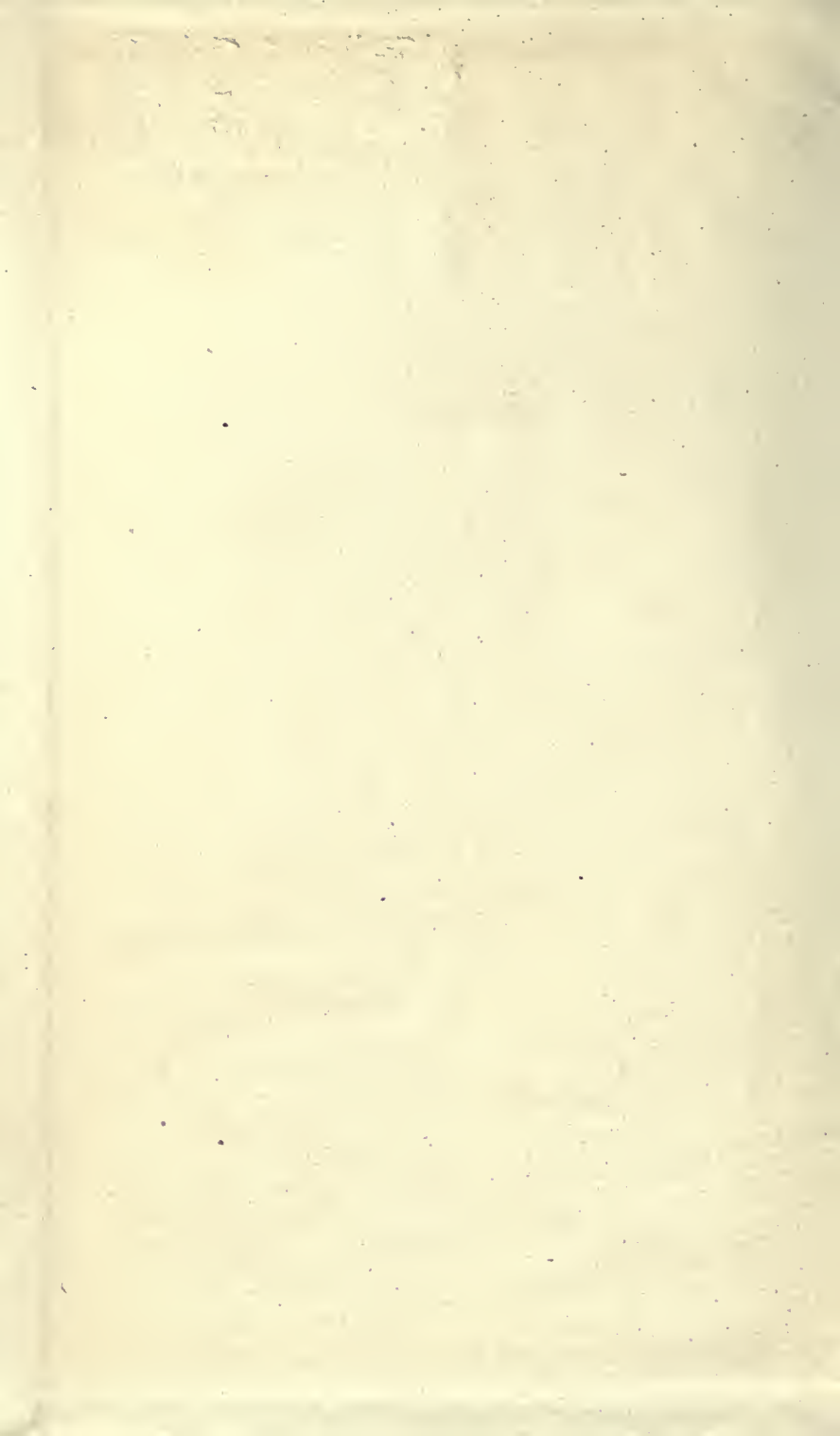


SIXTY-FIVE ON TIME



BY JEAN K. BAIRD



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Crissman had opened the bucket and was laying out
his lunch. (See page 55.)

SIXTY-FIVE ON TIME

BY

JEAN K. BAIRD

Author of "Little Rhody," "Elizabeth Hobart at
Exeter Hall," "The Honor Girl," "Cash
Three," "Danny," etc.



[HALFTONES BY
ARTHUR DE BEBIAN

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SIXTY-FIVE ON TIME

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

A PROMOTION

The characteristic features of the town were great railroad shops where engines and passenger coaches were constructed. These were at the north side of town, lying close to the foot of the mountains. Before them stretched half a hundred tracks which for the greater part of the time were filled with freight cars and yard engines. They were two miles long and from thirty to fifty tracks wide, yet the freight during the shipping seasons had been congested for days—blocked in so tight that the yard-master was forced to exercise the greatest care and judgment to clear the way.

The town lay south of the tracks. A workman risked life and limb should he attempt to pass over the tracks among the shifting engines, the hundreds of moving cars, and at regular hours, the dash of the flyers which went whizzing on to the station at the west end.

To prevent accidents and protect the lives of the men, the company had constructed an iron bridge thirty feet above the tracks and reaching from the shops to town. Over this an army of three thousand skilled mechanics passed each noon hour on their way to dinner; and at all hours, day and night, the crews for the trains came and went, for the yard also marked the division where crews and engines were changed.

These trainmen were a happy set in spite of the fact that their work was dangerous and that they were out at all hours and in all kinds of weather.

Sixty-five had but entered the yard when the yard-master spoke to James Crissman, the front brakeman. "You're ordered to

report at the office the first thing, Jimmy, my boy."

"What's doing?"

"Dunno—nothing to the bad. So long." He turned with watch in hand, waiting the second until he could give the passenger engineer orders to draw out from the station.

Crissman, the brakeman, puckered up his brow. A call to the superintendent's office generally meant no good. He ran over his conduct of the last few weeks. There was nothing in that to cause alarm. He had been on time. He had not stopped in a saloon but once and then only for a lunch for he was not a drinking man. He put away his lanterns and flags and made his way to the office.

The conference lasted but a few minutes. Then Crissman hurried out and across the great bridge toward home. He was holding his head high; his lunch bucket swung in his hand, and he whistled for joy.

He traversed the long, narrow street to-

ward his home. Never before had he covered the distance in so short a time. His feet fairly flew. He entered the yard, kissed the boy who ran to meet him, picked up the toddling baby and tossed her high in the air, and then turned to his wife. There was no need to tell her that something unexpected had happened.

"What is it?" she asked. "Do tell me, Jim."

"Trump's been transferred to Sunbury. He'll make the run from there here on Number Nine. That leaves a place on our crew and I'm the man to step into it."

"Conductor, Jim? You don't mean it." She made an effort to be calm but her knees trembled under her so that she could not stand. Sinking into a chair, she fanned herself with her working apron.

"How things do come around," she said. "Of course, I knew you'd get a raise sometime, but I never for a moment thought it would be so soon. What will you get?"

"Trump has never made less than a hun-

dred and thirty dollars a month, and when freight's heavy, he's gone up to one hundred and sixty."

"To think of it! That'll be five dollars a day on an average."

He nodded his head, dropped down on the steps near which she sat, and mopped his brow. "Whew, but I'm hot! I got over that bridge on schedule time. I knew you'd be glad to hear the news. As I turned down Eighth Street, Kelly tried to flag me, but I hurried on home. A hundred and sixty a month. Think of it!"

"I'm thinking as hard as I can," said his wife. She neither smiled nor laughed but her voice had a little excited catch in it as she spoke. The man looked at her with an expression of satisfaction. He was so big and strong while she was so dainty and fragile that he often wondered what she saw in him to love; he often asked her, but she replied evasively.

Now as he let his eye rest on her in admiration she said as though she understood

his thoughts, "It's the new dress I was making. I put the last stitch in it this morning, then I got at it and pressed it. I wanted to have it on when you came home. I felt sure that you'd be in about supper time."

"How'd you know?"

"Mr. Sapp passed here about dinner time. He said that you had taken siding at Keating for the flyer. He said he caught a glimpse of Wright in the cabin and knew that you'd gone out with them."

"We'd been in before the flyer if there hadn't been trouble with an air-brake. We dragged along from Sinnamahoning to Keating. We were so late there that we had to take siding and wait for orders for we knew the Buffalo was due."

She smoothed out her gown. "I rather like my dress, though I wished I'd not made short sleeves. Somehow it looks kind of girlish to go about showing your arms."

"What if it does? Hain't you a girl? Yes, I know what you're going to say—but you don't look it. If I didn't know, I'd

say you weren't a day over eighteen. That dress is all right. It's a dandy. I tell you what, Allie, you can get what you want with this raise. I like to see a woman fixed up. There'll be no use in you're doing without anything you need."

"You talk as though I'd been wearing rags and eating crusts. I've had all I need ever since I've been married, and I could have gotten along on less. There's plenty of women who have."

"But you counted close to do it. You've skimped and saved a penny many a time when I would have let her go. I tell you when M. A. R. told me this morning about the raise I could scarcely wait until I got across the bridge to tell the old woman and the kids." He gave her arm a playful pinch and, turning, picked up the children and held one on each knee.

"What I am pleased with most of all is about finishing paying for the house. You don't know how I hated to pay out that interest," she said with a sweet seriousness in

her voice and expression. "Of course, I knew it was less than we would have paid out for rent, but just the same it seemed such a lot."

"But that's done for or will be soon. I can pay off Ruley the day the money's due. I tell you we haven't done so bad. The lot has doubled in value since we took it. It's worth three thousand now if it's worth a cent. I could get that in cash any day and five years from now it will be worth a good bit more."

"The money's due in September. I suppose it's a woman's way of being anxious, but I won't be easy until every cent's paid."

"I bet on it; a woman's always looking around for something to worry about; and if she can't find any good reason she begins to worry because she's afraid that there's something to worry about and she's not doing it. There's money enough in Lane's bank to pay that debt and more too. I'd pay it this minute if Ruley would let me, but he's not going to give up a good solid

six per cent. one minute before he has to. But wait until the fifth day of September and it will be ours—every nail of it. Then we'll fix things up. I've always wanted a big covered back porch where I can sit in my shirt sleeves when the weather's warm and smoke without shocking the neighbors. We'll put on a slate roof—it costs like sixty but it pays in the end, and cement walks and iron fences. Whatever we fix, we'll fix to stay. Hain't that so, toddlekins?" and he tickled the baby as he spoke and she laughed aloud.

"Daddy means to get the pretty thing for you kids after while—you'll have all that's going."

He tossed Laura in the air, and gave Thomas a ride on his foot before he spoke again. When he did so, his voice had a touch of regret in it. The woman who heard, and who understood him as no one else did, could scarcely keep the tears from her eyes. She knew how hard his life had been without the freedom of childhood or

the love and protection of a father worthy the name. She knew that his soul cried out for the finer things of life. He had longed to walk in the world of science and learning. He keenly felt his ignorance and lack of training but the things which he had desired most in his youth had been denied him; and a sadness and a regret were always with him.

"I wasn't thinking of myself," he said slowly and seriously. "I don't want my boy knocked around as I was—never sent to school after I was able to do a bit of work. There hain't a day passes that I don't feel the lack of learning. I made up my mind that my boy and girl were going to have a chance if I could give it to them. They'll be kept in school and they'll have a home and plenty to eat if I have to drag myself out to earn it. We'll lay a little by and if they want to go away to school when they've finished here, we'll have the money ready. But we'll give them a chance to look about and get ready for work. They'll not be pushed into it when they're only babies."

His wife leaned forward and rested her hand on his shoulder. It was like a caress to him, giving him sympathy, affection and confidence.

“When I was a kid,” he began again, “I used to think that I’d like to be a doctor—not just a little runt sitting in an office and tying up pills, but one that knew his runs and had a clear track. I’ve seen men mangled up and the doctors cut off a leg without trying to see if it could be made solid again. I wouldn’t be that kind. I’d hang out to save a man’s limb until there would be only a question between it and death. Even then I’d not hurry, for some of us would rather be dead altogether than go through life just half a man. I always wanted to be a surgeon.”

“But it wasn’t to be, Jim. Perhaps if you had gone away to school and been a great doctor, you wouldn’t have met me; or if you had, I would have seemed so ignorant that you would not have cared for me.”

“I’d care for you whatever I was. I

wouldn't have thought about what you knew. I'd just said to myself, 'There's the girl I want for my wife,' and that would have been you every time—whether I was a big surgeon or only a train runner."

"Of course you'd say that now. It wouldn't be nice to say anything else." A flush had come to her cheeks as he spoke and a sparkle to her eyes.

"No, that's honest. I'm not just saying it. But I was telling you about wanting to be a surgeon. I can't be that now. The time's past for such work for me. I can be a conductor, it seems—at least the men think so, and I'll be the best one that I can be. But what I can't be myself, I mean Thomas to be. I tell you that there's nothing else in the world I'd want, if I could see him a fine doctor. I want him a good one or none at all. If he's got the brains and will do it, I'll see that he has the money."

"He's got the brains," said the mother proudly. "Why, think, Jim, he hasn't been

in school a day and yet he can read any part of that first reader! He just picked it up himself. I didn't make him work; but he'd come to me and ask me what the word was and I'd tell him, 'Willie' or 'slate' or whatever the word was and there before I knew it, he was reading as easy as could be, 'Willie has a slate.' "

"He takes after you on that, Alice." He sat a moment thinking seriously, then continued. "I won't run myself down though. I could have learned something if I'd had a chance. I hain't dumb. I've got it in me to learn, and I've picked up what I could. Lack of brains wasn't what kept me back. Men that knew my father say that he was smart as a whip and that he knew how to work. That was before he got so run down. But I don't remember him that way. I know only how afraid I was whenever he'd come in and how I would run off and hide, and how he'd take my wages right out of my hand and I was so afraid that I didn't dare open my mouth. But at last I thought it

out. I'd order things at the grocer's and pay for them before I'd get home and—"

"Yes; Jim, but let's don't talk of it now. It was pretty hard; but it's no use feeling so about what's gone. We'll give Thomas a chance—or you will. I can't earn like lots of women. My own sewing worries me, and if I would try to do something for the children I'd—"

"Hain't you doing lots? Don't you sew for them and get their meals and see that they're well and don't you save where I'd spend? When it comes to doing something for them, I'm not in it with you. Earning the money hain't half of the game. Why, Allie, I couldn't possibly do what you do—ten thousand things a day. I'd forget half of them."

Her face dimpled with delight. "Here I'm forgetting supper-time and me here talking as though I hadn't a thing to do. It won't take me long. I got most of it ready this morning."

She went into the house. The man fussed with the children a few minutes and then joined her at her work.

"Do you remember that big Tony Rin-allo?" he asked as he came into the kitchen. "That big Dago who used to work on the street?"

"Yes, indeed. I used to be afraid of him. What made you think of him?"

"He was hurt yesterday. He's been working up at the quarry and a blast went off before the Dagos got out of the way. We knew that something was wrong but couldn't tell what. We were running forty miles an hour and just as we passed the O. K. tower, we saw the Dagos running back and yelling."

"Didn't you stop?"

"Stop! No; we're not running trains as we please. A few Dagos, more or less, won't matter. There'll be more trouble up there. Deise told me they used dynamite and the Dagos used as much as was handy.

The foreman's off for a visit and he let the foreigners run without orders. If someone don't flag them, there'll be trouble."

"It's too bad." She turned to the stove and began to dish up the meal.

"Will you carry in the coffee, Jim? I'll take these in and then supper'll be ready."

CHAPTER II

THE RUMOR

The main street of the town faced the railroad. The stores were large and carried a fine line of goods in proportion to the size of the town. The people on the whole were good buyers, for the men made excellent wages and work was steady. There were no poor. Only at rare intervals did any of the people of the town need help. If one did without the comforts of life, it was because he was constitutionally opposed to effort of any kind, for the work was there crying out to be done.

This main thoroughfare had more than its quota of saloons. One or two had attained the dignity of being hotels; the others were drinking-places doing business regardless of

law, and flaunting their law breaking in the face of an unconcerned public.

Before these places were lines of loafers, their chairs tilted back against the side of the building, their feet stuck out on the thoroughfare, and with cigars or tobacco in use. These groups varied in harmony with the place about which they loafed. About the principal hotel were well-dressed men in tailored suits, patent-leather shoes, smoking high-priced cigars. Further down the street were those who were at the lower rung of the ladder with no ambition or prospect of rising.

These groups rolled with delectable palate every bit of gossip in town and chewed the cud of scandal as a cow does one of grass.

The leading spirit who occupied a chair before the big hotel was Pat Russel, a wit, a wag, the spirit of humor and repartee. He was not a shop man but had won an independent fortune in the management of brick-works and quarries. He was clean shaven and immaculate, with the map of

Ireland on his face and the twist of her language on his tongue. He was slow in speech and droll in his humor; a friend to a friend, and an enemy to an enemy. Years before he had had an unpleasant experience with Lane, the cashier of the private bank of the town. Lane, Russel declared, had done him a dirty trick. That had been a score of years before, when Lane had but started to push his way in the world.

Russel had mentioned the matter to no one since then, and those who knew aught about it supposed that he had forgotten it long ago, but gave the banker a wide berth. There was but a nod in passing, but no further exchange of courtesy. Nevertheless he remembered the trick and waited his time to settle accounts and close the books.

This particular evening, he had a small group about him who listened attentively to what he was saying. He spoke slowly in a low, full voice that always had in it a touch of sadness whether the subject under discussion was humorous or otherwise.

"I've heard, but of course I'm not telling it as a fact. I pass it on to you as it came to me."

"Did you hear how much?"

"A mere trifle. Fifteen thousand, I heard. Not enough to put him out of business, just enough to keep him thinking late."

"Fifteen thousand this time, and perhaps fifty next time. When a man starts speculating he loses his senses," said one of the men with a show of feeling.

"Not when he *starts*—but just *before* he starts, my son," said Pat dryly. "What's fifty thousand to a man when it's not his own?"

"He'll not speculate with mine," said one of the group. "I haven't much but I'll draw out every cent to-morrow. I'm not sweating ten hours a day to feed lambs to Wall Street."

"Gently, my son, gently," with a sidewise gesture of his palm. "Would you deny the man his fling? You've not lost yet. I

can't see how you can. They've real estate here that's surety enough for depositors. Now this Park Street row."

There was a snort of disgust from one of the group. "Park Street property! That was disposed of ten days ago. I'm in position to know about it. It isn't hearsay. It brought twenty thousand."

"Twenty thousand! And it's worth thirty any day! If they wanted to get rid of it, why didn't they advertise? I'd made good for twenty-five thousand myself. Are the heirs in business to cheat themselves?"

There was silence for a moment. The Park Street tenements would have been sold for a song if they had been disposed of at thirty thousand. A quiet sale, too. To what did such signs point? They had not reached a conclusion before Pat continued with his airy, graceful gesture. "Twenty thousand! I suppose that went to fill up the gap made by the bears. Well, well! It don't pay for a country lad to go hunting bears on Wall Street."

"I'm glad I heard this piece of news. I'll do my banking business somewhere else, and I'll start at eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"You're as concerned as a mother hen with a small duck. Go gently, my son. There's no danger, and I don't want you to be suspicious of Lane. He has a reputation of being a good business man. As far as the Park Street tenements go, they may mean nothing. There's plenty of other Lane estate property in town."

"And all mortgaged to the last cent." This remark was from a stranger, a traveling salesman who had been listening. The others turned toward him with an expression of inquiry.

"I know," he said in answer to their looks. "I came here to put up presses and office fittings for a daily paper. The Lane estate could not only not pay cash but couldn't give a first mortgage on one property in its name."

Pat gave his characteristic gesture and

turned away from the group. He had in mind the time when Lane had driven him to the wall almost twenty years before. He had started the ball rolling. It would grow until it was big enough to crush Lane's business into atoms. He saw Jim Crissman coming down the street. He was several squares away but Pat's sharp eyes noted him. He drew him aside as he came near.

"I've a word for your ear, my son," he said. Jim drew from the crowd of men and came close. He was always a man of few words except with those he knew well and now he stood silent until Pat was ready to speak.

"I want to put you next to a little business transaction that's taken place with some of your friends."

"Well?"

"I haven't lived in this little village, my son, and seen you grow up without learning a thing or two. You've not been spending money. You've been laying a little by."

"A little—yes. Why?"

“A word to you then. There’s a rumor that our banker has been taking a few flyers on the market. There’ll be a run on the bank to-morrow. If I’d as much as a dollar there, I’d have it in my inside pocket to-morrow. Just a word to the wise is sufficient. I’m walking on.” He waved his hand with stately grace and walked on.

His words troubled Jim. He had two thousand dollars, every cent of which meant hard work and self-denial. He did not know what to think. He had never let the word of one man influence his actions. Yet Pat Russel was a keen business man and knew the value of the dollar. He was not one to speak at random. His statements held water.

In this uncertain condition of mind, he joined the group of which the commercial traveler was now the center. They too were discussing the possibility of the bank failing. Jim Crissman stood and listened, not knowing that Pat Russel had put the idea into their minds as he had into his.

At last he turned away. "It seems to be the general impression," he said to himself. "I'm glad Russel hung out the red flag. It might have been a head-on collision with me. I'll go home and tell Allie. I'll talk it over with her."

The children were in bed when he reached home. Alice in her new white linen dress was sitting in the living-room, putting a few last stitches into her weekly mending.

"I had a talk with Russel down town," he said, sitting down beside her. "He thinks Lane's bank is about ready to go under." Then without further questioning he told her of the word Russel had passed on to him.

She listened until he had finished and then said pertinently, "Russel has been mad at Lane ever since Lane put him out of business. I suppose he's waiting his chance to get even."

"There is not a better fellow in town than just Pat Russel. There's nothing he wouldn't do for a fellow."

“When the fellow’s his friend, Jim. And there’s nothing he wouldn’t do against one that isn’t. In this case I’d take his words with a pinch of salt.”

“I’d about made up my mind to get the money the first thing in the morning. I’d hate like sixty to lose it.”

“So would I, but I don’t think there’s a bit of danger, Jim. Pat Russel has started the report to harm Lane if he can. What if he did lose fifteen thousand dollars? There’s blocks enough here in town, belonging to the Lane heirs to satisfy every creditor if the bank fails.”

In spite of his wife’s confidence, Jim Crissman went to bed that night with an uneasy feeling. But after a good night’s sleep he was more confident and decided to let the money lie in the bank for a while at least. Meanwhile he would be on the alert and if fresh rumors came to his ears, he would withdraw his money. There were numerous duties to keep him busy about the

house until dinner-time, so that the afternoon came before he went out.

There were no loafers at this time of day—only here and there a straggler or a trainman waiting to be called out. But he had not gone a square before he again heard the report of the possible failure of the bank.

Russel's words of the evening before, whether they were true or false, had caused a run on the bank. So far every demand had been met without hesitancy; but if the report gained credence and the run continued, it was doubtful if the bank could honor its own checks. A few hours of confidence might save it, or a few hours of lack of confidence push it to the wall.

James Crissman walked down the street on which the bank stood. He had not made up his mind what course he would take. As he turned into the square, he met a half-dozen good business men on their way from Lane's. They had looked to their own interest and put themselves on the safe side.

In an instant Crissman decided. "I'll be on the safe side along with the rest," he argued. "If nothing happens and affairs move along, it will be an easy matter to deposit it again."

He walked into the bank, drew up a check, counted over the bills given him, and slipping them into an inner pocket, left the building. The bank was pretty well filled at this time. A dozen men were waiting their turn, one or two of whom he knew merely by sight.

The train crews were written up on the bulletin before the Y. M. C. A. building. He walked down that way and found he was fifth out. That might mean any time within the next twelve hours, yet it was hardly possible that he would be called before morning. There was no hurry so he stopped to talk to several of the men about the reading-rooms and then walked over to an adjoining hotel with one of the trainmen who wished to see a man. These matters kept him until almost six o'clock. He went

home then to find supper waiting for him. He told Alice at once about withdrawing the money.

She was a wise little soul who, when a thing was done, never wasted energy in finding fault.

"Well, if you think it's best, Jim," she said, "I suppose it's all right. But don't leave the money about where I know anything about it. I'd be worried sick for fear it might be stolen."

"I'll fix it good and safe. Don't you worry yourself, Allie." She was about to pour him a second cup of coffee, and he gave the hand which held it out to him an encouraging little pat. "Don't give it a thought, Allie. I'll put it in a safe place."

He had but spoken when the front door-bell rang. With bustling, housewifely interest Allie hurried to the door to find there a fine-looking stranger who inquired if Mr. Crissman was at home.

"Yes; will you come in?"

"Is he in the house?"

"Yes; come in. I will call him. He's at supper."

But at this the stranger moved from the door. "I did not want to see him," he said lamely. "I just wished to be sure that he was at home."

At this her fears bristled up. She straightened her shoulders and looked him straight in the eye.

"This is rather a queer performance," she said. "Why did you come to his house to ask about him if you did not wish to see him? I cannot understand such actions."

The face of the stranger flushed. "I suppose it does seem strange. I didn't think of that. But I'll tell you. My name is Smith—the man who has the lumber job up Paddy's Run. I was in the bank this afternoon when your husband drew out quite a little roll of money. I was away back in the line. There were two men standing off at the side—deadbeats both of them. I caught a look that passed between them and I decided I'd keep my eye on them. When

Crissman left they were not far behind him. They hung outside the Y. M. C. A. while he was inside; and they were in the hotel when he was there. I saw him start home up the tracks and those two bums watched him from a corner. Someone spoke to me just then and I lost track of the three of them. I thought I'd come around and see if he was at home. I felt uneasy."

He did not wait for further speech, but turned away and was at the gate before she had recovered sufficiently from her surprise to thank him. When he had given his name she recognized him as the Mr. Smith who was lumbering up the Run, and she knew that he was a man to be depended upon.

Locking and bolting the front door, she went back to the dining-room. She was really much excited and worried, but treated the matter as lightly as she could when she told her husband.

"I want you to promise one thing, Jim," she said when she had finished the story. "That is that you will not come up that

lonely way by the tracks. It will only take you a few minutes more to come by the street. It's lighted and there's always someone about. I'll feel safe if you promise me that."

"There's no danger along the track. There's always yardmen in sight. Nothing could happen to a fellow without some of them seeing; but if it will save you any worry, I'll promise. I'll keep to the middle of the walk and I'll come home down Erie Avenue. Does that satisfy you?"

He laughed aloud at her concern.

"It's just as well to be on the safe side," she said, annoyed at his laugh. "You may be glad some day that you made the promise."

"I think I'll count over the money," he said, "and be sure that it's all here before I put it away."

He took out the roll of bills and counted them over. "Eight one-hundreds and fifty twenties," he said. "It's all there." He looked at it reflectively. "I tell you that's

meant a good many hours of hard work and a good bit of going without what I wanted. Why, the first year I made up my mind to save, Allie, I hadn't a suit to my back—just my working clothes and the shoes that I wore right along were so patched and mended that a tramp would have felt insulted if I had offered them to him. But that time's gone now and we've got a start. The hardest pull's over. We'll pay for the house and we'll live well and have a few dollars to lay by. I tell you there's nothing that makes a man feel as good as knowing he can provide for his folks and not ask favors of anyone."

With the money in his hand he got up from the table and left the dining-room. Alice began to clear off the table and wash the dishes. She heard Jim moving about upstairs and she smiled to herself as she thought how secretly he was hiding the money. She could hear him opening bureau drawers and fussing about in the awkward, noisy way that was his.

The baby was cooing in her high chair, and Thomas was fussing about to go upstairs to his father. But Alice kept him with her.

"Father is busy now. He doesn't want you with him," she said. "Be a good boy and father will soon be here."

It was but a few minutes when Jim came downstairs and passed through the kitchen into the back yard, Thomas following.

"You'd better split some kindling in case you'd be called out early," she called after him.

She heard him fussing about in the woodshed and later the sound of an axe. Then Thomas came in with tears in his eyes. "Papa's took my pretty red box," he said, hiding his face in his mother's skirt. "I want it."

His father followed with an armload of kindling. Getting rid of the wood, he turned and caught the boy up in his arms.

"That's too bad, youngster! But don't cry. I'll get you a prettier box, the first

time I go down street and I'll put some pennies in it for you. There, be a big man and don't cry." He turned to Alice. "I took that tin box to put the money in. Mice or rats can't gnaw into that and it won't get damp."

She smiled. "I knew you couldn't keep a secret. I knew you'd tell me where you put it before you'd sleep."

"But I haven't told you. It's in the box. But where's the box? That will keep you guessing, old lady."



CHAPTER III

THE FIRST RUN

In spite of being nervous, Alice fell into a sound sleep almost as soon as her head touched the pillow. Fortunately for her, the day had been a busy one, as were most of her days. She had put the house in order, baked and prepared food suitable for the lunch bucket, bathed and dressed the children; finished a white dress for herself and put the last stitches in the weekly mending for the family.

She wakened with a start. Someone was pounding on the side door directly below their bedroom window. Her first thought was that someone was breaking in to rob them. She was trembling with fear but fortunately Jim was more wide-awake than

she and was already at the window with his head half way out.

"Hello, there!" he cried. "What do you want?"

"It's Crandall. You're called for Sixty-five on time."

"I don't know what time that is, Crandy. This is my first time out."

"At one-thirty."

"All right. What does it show up now?"

"A quarter past twelve."

"All right, but it's a pity you couldn't call a fellow earlier."

"How could I? You were marked up early, but Bennet's sick and I've gone from one end of the town to the other. I haven't called upon Bowman yet and he's clear across the bridge."

He called back his speech as he hurried along. Crissman paid little heed to him.

"I have to go out at one-thirty, Allie." But she was already out of bed and lighting the lamp.

"You don't need to get up," he said.

"I'll cook myself a few eggs and pack my bucket. Go back to bed and get your sleep."

"Indeed, I won't! Do you think I'm going to let you go off that way? I'll slip on a dressing sacque and slippers. I won't bother about dressing."

She was ready in a few minutes and in the kitchen where a coal fire was burning. She stuck in a few sticks of light wood, put on the kettle and began to grind coffee. With wonderful dispatch she soon had hot coffee, ham and eggs ready for his breakfast. While he ate, she packed his bucket, keeping up a running fire of conversation.

"I have a custard for your lunch," and she held up the small cup in which it had been baked. "It turned out lovely. There's veal loaf left from supper and there's cold ham, too. Which would you rather have, Jim? I'll put a little of both in. Maybe some of the other men would like a little extra!"

"Whew," he cried at last, looking at his

watch. "Five minutes of one! I've got to start."

He took up his cap and bucket. His wife followed him to the door, a look of wistful tenderness on her face. With his hand upon the knob, he drew her toward him, and gave her a hearty kiss. "Good-bye, Allie. Now lock the door and go up to bed right away. Take good care of the kids. I'll be in to-morrow morning some time."

He closed the door after him, then stood listening until he heard her turn the key. Satisfied that she was safe from harm, he went on his way whistling cheerfully through the dark,—a great, strong man fearful of nothing which lay before him—a giant in physical and moral strength, yet as simple-minded and as tender-hearted as a child.

Remembering the promise given to his wife to avoid the short cuts across the unlighted tracks, he made his way down the main street. It was one o'clock in the morning, yet a few saloons were yet open

for business. As he went up the steps to the foot bridge, he met Kepperly, his rear brakeman, and together they went into the yard office. The train was already made up. The engineer was bringing his engine from the roundhouse. One of the hostlers, black and grimy, stood near the track of the turntable and passed a few light words with him.

The engine with its fireman and engineer ran up to the switch at the end of the yard, while Crissman with the trainmen crossed to the train.

The yardmaster growled at their being not a minute too early and threatened to send out an extra the first time one of them stood a minute late.

"This train's got to pull out at one-thirty, and not half a minute later," he growled. He stood with his open watch in his hand, and his lantern swung over his arm. The men jeered and made fun of him with apparent good nature and gave him answer for answer.

The instant the minute hand marked the half hour, he swung out his lantern. The long train moved slowly from the yard, in the gloom of which it curved its black sinuous length like a huge snake. When it had cleared the yard and rounded the curve of the mountains above Drury's Run, it increased its speed until it was going at the rate of forty miles an hour.

"Where do you stop for orders?" asked the end brakeman coming up to Crissman.

"At the O. K. tower this side of Sterling."

"Running close. I thought we'd go clear through. I was wishing we would. We'd not have to lay over but a few hours if we'd not take siding here."

"We're to take siding only for the flyer. If it's on time, we'll barely make it."

"That's all right about getting there on close time; but what about leaving?"

"Can't tell until we get orders. I think though that we'll pull out at once."

"I don't like this running so close. If

we'd run late we'd risk our necks to get out of the way of Number Ten."

"Something's wrong with your liver, Nelson," he said. "One minute you're all for getting home quick and the next minute you're afraid we're running too close."

The train had given the signal for the Sterling crossing and Crissman moved away to attend to his work. A moment later he swung himself from the train and went into the tower for orders. He was back in a moment.

"You'll be a happy lad, Nelson," he said jocularly. "Number Ten is running an hour later. We're to lay here until she's heard from."

"Where is she?"

"Search me. She left Olean on time but she hasn't reached Ridgway. We may be tied here for the rest of the morning."

"Then I'm going to sleep," was Nelson's reply as he went back to the caboose.

It was now broad daylight. The trainmen, with the exception of Nelson, sat at

the foot of the O. K. steps and smoked and retold stories of what they had seen and heard on the road.

The track ran close to the bank of the river. At right angles to it and crossing on a viaduct ran the H. R. & P. Road. The mountains on the opposite side of the river were steep and almost barren of vegetation, with only here and there clumps of firs showing among the rocks. Fifty feet above the water line was a quarry of flagstone and around the curve of the mountain, under the protection of an overhanging cliff, were the shanties of the foreign laborers. Smoke was already curling from the chimneys and the faint blue line was visible to the trainmen across the river.

"What time have you?" asked Page when the stories of the road had all been told, and the pipes had been smoked out.

"Seven fifteen and she's right to the dot," replied Crissman. Getting up and moving away from the men, he walked to the end of

the train. He stopped suddenly before a return empty. Going close to the door, he peered within and then cried, "Hello, butty, what's wrong with you?"

"I'll vamoose," was the reply. "You don't need to jerk me up. But if you have time, let me talk to you a minute." The speaker moved close to Crissman and swinging himself out, sat down on the edge of the open box-car. He was a young man not more than twenty-five years old if he was that. He had a fine face with an intellectual brow and intelligent eyes; well-dressed but dusty and travel-stained. His lips twitched nervously and he glanced fearfully about him as though he feared to be seen.

"What sort of men have you with you?" he asked.

"First rate. How long have you been on?"

"Since the train was made up."

"Where did you come from?"

"No matter," was the reply. "I'm leav-

ing it. That's all. But I've come a good way. Whereabouts can I strike a western train?"

"Freight?"

"Not necessarily. I can pay my way. I bummed my way so far because I didn't want a passenger train. What's that road over there?" pointing to the track across the viaduct.

"That will take you into DuBois. You can get pretty fair trains from there."

"How soon will a train come along and how far must I go to get it?"

"An accommodation crosses the viaduct somewhere about eight o'clock. The nearest station is three miles on the other side of the river, but they take water on this side. You could get on there if you're anxious to pull out."

"I am. The quicker I'm away the better pleased I'll be. Say, look here. I'm going to tell you something and I want you to do something for me. Will you promise?"

"That depends. I might be promising to run beyond the red lights. Fire away."

The young man moved closer and spoke long and earnestly to Crissman. He became quite excited and his breath came in short gasps. Crissman stood with his shoulders braced against the edge of the car and listened without comment until the stranger had finished.

"Of course, I don't know anything about it," he said at last. "I've got only your word for it and I don't know what that's worth. But, either way, I can't see that any harm can come of it. It won't mean anything to me one way or the other."

The face of the stranger brightened. Taking a memorandum book and pencil he wrote hastily and nervously. Then tearing the slip of paper from the book he handed it to him.

"Tell him to write to me there in my own name. He's to write if he don't want to lose track of me and if everything's all

right. I'm trusting you. I don't know why, but you look like a man that would help a fellow out of a bad place."

"What do you mean to do now?"

"To go to that place as quick as I can. I'll be beyond reach there. But one thing I'll do, I've a way to earn a good living. I'm not helpless. I'll start in and I'll see that I don't make the same mistake twice."

There was nothing of the preacher about Jim Crissman. Here was an excellent opportunity for a homily on the conduct of life; but he did not seize it. He was thinking of the boyish stranger who had thrown himself upon his mercy.

"You mean to take that train when she stops at the crossing?"

"Yes; if I can."

"Better get yourself together then. Come down to the caboose and wash up. You don't want to look as though you were on your uppers."

"But the other men?" he glanced apprehensively toward the tower.

"Don't give them a thought. They won't flag us. Come on! You haven't much time to spare." He started down the track. After a moment's hesitancy, the stranger swung himself out of the car and followed. By the time he reached the caboose, Crissman was there with a basin of water and a towel for him.

Nelson unrolled himself from his quilt, looked up to see who had come in and seeing that Crissman was in some way responsible for the stranger's appearance, said affably, "Hello, butty, taking off the first coat?"

Crissman had opened the bucket and was laying out his lunch when the stranger finished washing and putting himself in order.

"Here's something to fill up on. It will be a long time before you'll have a chance to get anything. Oh, that's all right." The stranger had again hesitated. "I've got plenty. The missus put in an extra helping of meat. She fixed up veal in some sort of

fixin's and she put some in for the men a taste. She always does that."

While he was speaking, he had made two large sandwiches of the bread and ham and thrust them into the young man's hands. "Eat them and then I'd cut down to the viaduct. That train will whistle for the bridge in about three minutes."

"That tastes good," said the stranger. "It's been a full day since I've had a bite to eat."

As he was about to leave the caboose, he seized Crissman's hand. "I can't—I don't have words to thank you. But you've been my guardian angel to-day. Good-bye. I'll never forget you, and you'll send word—say in the course of a month." He looked up into Crissman's face while he wrung his hands.

"I'll see to that. Good-bye and take good care of yourself!" The young man hurried from the train, went down the track like one who was hurried on by fear.



At his first word the girls had clutched each other tightly. *(See page 174.)*

Crissman walked back to the O. K. tower.

"Number Ten about due," said the operator. "Your orders are awaiting you."

Crissman took the slip of paper and read it carefully. He folded it and slipped it between the fasteners of his overalls. The other piece of paper—the smaller piece which the stranger had given him—he crumpled up in the palm of his hand. He had not read it, being more interested in seeing the stranger cared for than in the address. Now he smoothed it out.

"Telluride, Mexico," he said, reading it aloud. "I'll remember that. If the paper should get lost I'll not be to the bad. The other is easy enough to remember. 'Surgeon in charge at the Dixmont Hospital.' That is nothing to keep in a fellow's mind."

Number Ten had whistled. He saw her rounding the curve of the river several miles away. She was tearing along at a great rate, fairly annihilating space in her effort to make up lost time. She whizzed

past Sixty-five on the siding and in a moment had rounded the bend of the river and was gone.

Crissman stood with his watch in hand and the crumpled piece of paper beneath it. It lacked two minutes of the time that he had orders for leaving. As he waited, the train running at right angles with his own crossed the viaduct. Someone leaned from the day coach to wave.

"He's made it then," said Crissman to himself. "I'm mighty glad. Somehow I sort of took a fancy to him. He was so worked up and excited about the affair that anyone could see that he wasn't used to doing things just that way."

The minute hand almost touched the time for leaving. Crissman raised his hand to signal the engineer, but that signal was never given. A terrific blast from the quarries fairly shook the mountains. A volley of broken rock pierced the air, and Crissman fell forward across the track.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AWAKENING

Alice had dressed for the afternoon in the new white frock that Jim had admired. She had a notion that he might make the run quicker than he had expected and she wished to be ready for his coming. She liked to have the house in order, the children and herself looking well when he came in. She was happy to get up early and work until late if everything was ready for Jim's home coming.

While the children were taking a late afternoon nap, she took her fancy work and went out to the front porch. She had taken but a few stitches when Dr. Heiner, the little Dutch doctor, came up the square. His medicine case was tucked up under his arm; his shoulders were hunched forward;

his nearsighted eyes were peering into space as he hurried on his way. To Alice's surprise he turned in at their gate.

"Is Jim home?" he asked.

"No, he went out early this morning. He's been promoted. This was his first time out as conductor." She tried to speak in an unconcerned, off-hand way as though she and Jim were above such things as promotions, but her voice thrilled with pride and pleasure in spite of her efforts.

"Won't you come up and sit down, Doctor? It's dreadfully warm." She moved from her chair to a smaller one.

"No; I just came in on an errand. When do you expect Jim in?"

"He said not until to-morrow morning. I suppose some time about one o'clock."

This was one of the hardest places in Doctor Heiner's life.

"Would you be surprised to know that he came earlier?"

For one instant there was an ominous silence. The piece of linen in her hand

was grasped so tightly that it almost separated. For one moment she sat thus and then she said quietly: "Where have you taken him?"

"To the emergency hospital. He isn't so bad, Alice."

"A wreck?"

"No, a blast from the quarry. We don't know much. His train went through without him, and none of his crew could come back to tell us the particulars. They brought him back on Sixty-two. It passed the O. K. tower a few minutes after the blast went off."

"Is he—" she could not finish. The words mangled and dead could not pass her lips.

"Nothing half so bad," he cried heartily. "Why, Alice, I wouldn't have the heart to come and tell you anything so dreadful. He isn't hurt outwardly. There isn't a cut or bruise anywhere about him. His heart is acting well and his pulse is almost normal; but he's unconscious in spite of that."

"He's been struck?" she asked eagerly.

"Exactly, although there's no mark on his head. But undoubtedly that is what has happened. It may be several hours or a day perhaps until he comes to himself, and then there may be a little fever; but nothing more."

"Shall I go with you? Is there anything you wish me to do? I'd rather wait on him than have anyone else. Does it mean an operation?"

"No, indeed. I don't believe I will let you go down to the emergency room. The men will bring him home at once if you are ready. It is noisy there and he must have absolute quiet."

"Everything is ready. Will you bring him soon?"

Dr. Heiner was amazed at her manner of hearing the news. She had depended in every way upon the great strong husband of hers, that he had expected her to fall the instant the support was gone.

"They'll bring him at once. I stopped to

tell my wife. She'll be along in a moment. There she comes now, so you will not be alone."

He turned to open the gate for his wife. Alice spoke again. "The babies are asleep, doctor. Will you bring Jim home before they awake? They might not understand about the stretcher and Thomas is such a nervous child."

"All right, all right," was the reply. He was relieved for he had dreaded breaking the news to Alice, feeling that she would take it hard.

Alice and Mrs. Heiner went into the house and made the bed ready for Jim. Everything was in readiness when the men brought him home and carried him upstairs into the front bedroom.

Thomas was awakened by the sound of the strange steps and ran into the upstairs hallway.

"Is papa home?" he cried and darted down the hall toward his father's room, but Alice stopped him.

“Your father’s sleeping, Thomas. You must not disturb him now.”

“But I want my new bank he promised me. He took my red box.”

“Yes, yes, dear. He put it away for a while. Mother will get it for you some day.”

Until that moment she had forgotten about the money. She had a sense of relief that he had put it safely away, for if he should be ill she would be free of the responsibility about it.

When the doctor and the men had gone, she sat by Jim’s side, smoothing his forehead or laying her hand upon his strong wrists. His eyes were closed and he lay like one in a heavy stupor. When she spoke to him and called him by name, he stirred uneasily as though her voice had power to break into his unconscious state and yet was not sufficient to arouse him.

She sat beside him until evening when Doctor Heiner came in, bringing with him a middle-aged woman who nursed.

“The Brotherhood of Trainmen came for me and told me to make myself useful.” She laid aside her hat and unrolling a package which she had brought with her, took out a blue and white checked gingham apron and put it on. “What do you want me to do—sit with him or get supper?”

“Get the children something to eat. I couldn’t swallow a bite. You’ll find things in the refrigerator or in the pantry off the kitchen. Look around and use whatever you find. I’ll stay with Jim.”

Mrs. Geiger went down to the kitchen with the baby on one arm and Thomas following after her. She was talking to them cheerily and promising them all manner of dainties if they would stay in the kitchen to help her.

Alice went back to Jim, to find Doctor Heiner was bending over him. She did not speak to the doctor but her eyes looked questioningly into his.

“He has a little fever,” was the reply to her look. “But that’s to be expected. If

he should be delirious in the night send Mrs. Geiger for me. I'll be around in the morning, and I'll bring young Haywood with me. He's interested and I'd like to have another physician's opinion."

Mrs. Geiger prepared the children's supper, made them ready for bed and sang them to sleep. Then she carried a cup of coffee and a sandwich to Alice.

"I can't eat," said Alice, pushing it aside.

"Oh, yes, you can. You've got to. He may be sick a week and if you don't eat you'll not be able to wait on him."

That settled the matter. Not able to wait on Jim when he needed it! She turned and taking the cup of coffee in one hand and the sandwich in the other with a heroic effort disposed of them.

The fever rose slowly during the night. The lodge to which Jim belonged sent a man to sit with him but Alice would not leave his side. Her hand rested upon his. If he stirred or moved she whispered, "Jim!" and

her voice reached through the darkness and quieted him.

As she soothed and petted him as she would have done with Laura or Thomas had they been ill, his fingers, which had been contracted tightly, relaxed in her hand, and the piece of paper now pressed into a wad fell from his grasp. She smoothed it out on the bed spread and read it. TELLURIDE, MEXICO. That was all. It meant nothing at all to her, but it might to Jim. So she put it safely away in the little trinket-case on her dresser. It might mean something or nothing, but it belonged to her husband and she treasured it as she did everything which touched him.

Then she went back to his side and watched over him all the night long, soothing and caressing him as a mother might a little child.

When morning came, the nurse and Doctor Heiner compelled her to leave the sick-room and lie down. They encouraged her

to believe that it was but a few hours until Jim would be himself again and it would fret him to see her heavy-eyed and worn. When she came back to the bedside the face of the patient was crimson with fever, his pulse was beating fast, and he was talking and moaning. Through the mutterings ran a thread of reason. He had promised to do something. What was it? When was he to do it? Whom did he promise? Something was pressing his head and kept him down or he would write at once. Dixmont Hospital. He could remember so much. He would not forget that. Then he asked for orders and inquired when Number Ten was due and he gave the time his train had been ordered out and even raised himself in bed, and gave the proper signal to the engineer—the signal he would have given the morning before had a second more of time been granted him.

The days now repeated themselves except that each succeeding one brought a great degree of fever and more intense suffering for

the patient. The pain became so great that the watchers held him in bed lest he might harm himself. A neighbor took Thomas and Laura home with her and Alice gave every minute of the day and night to him. She seemed incapable of a thought for herself or her children. She knew neither fatigue nor hunger, but sat day after day by the bed, allowing no one except herself to touch him. The doctor's orders and pleadings were wasted. She looked at him in open-eyed wonder when he suggested that she rest.

"And leave Jim?" she asked as though such a thought could not be considered.

There were nine days of fever and delirium and then the change came. The patient lay white and quiet, but without apparent suffering, taking what food was offered to him. His eyes followed his wife's movements about the room and a satisfied look came over his face when she sat by his bedside with her hand in his. He made no effort to talk, and for the first few days

after the fever left him, she was content to let him lie quiet. Then she talked to him, asking him how he had rested and if he had any pain. He made no answer; but turned and looked at her oddly and smiled. The smile was like that of a child who in its sleep is visited with beautiful dreams. As the days passed, she told him of matters about the house; who had brought him the flowers and who had come to ask about him. She dwelt at length on the good behavior of Thomas and Laura; how they had let a neighbor take care of them and had not cried for their mother, but had tried to be good because father was ill. And she ended the story with the promise that on the morrow the children were to be allowed to come in for a few minutes. He made no attempt to answer her but smiled as before and held her hand close in his own.

The patient was sleeping so well at night that the doctor advised Alice to go to bed and rest. The nurse's cot was yet in the hall. She drew it close to the bedroom door,

that she might hear the faintest movement on the part of the patient. Then for the first time since the accident she lay down and slept.

It was early morning when she was awakened by a movement in the bedroom. In an instant she was wide awake and within the room. The sick man was up and dressed, and, standing before the mirror was giving the last few touches to his dressing, in just the same way she had seen him do hundreds of times before. He was wearing his watch which he had wound. The hands had stopped the instant he had fallen, almost a month before. The mainspring was broken but he did not realize that anything was wrong with it. The hands never moved away from that fatal eight-fifteen which marked the time of his hurt.

“Why, Jim, you don’t mean to get up?”

“Yes.”

“But you are not strong enough! You must remember that you’re weak yet. You had better stay in bed until the doctor comes.

You've been too sick to get up this way."

"I'm not sick." She fancied he looked at her oddly. She was almost decided to send at once for Doctor Heiner, but with second thought she gave that up. Men were different from women and perhaps they became well all at once without a long period of convalescence.

Jim walked out into the hall and down stairs. The street was quiet, the hour being too early for pedestrians. He passed out to the porch and, drawing forward a large rocker, seated himself, and tilting it backward balanced it and himself with his feet on the railing of the porch. This was his favorite loafing position. A thrill of joy went through Alice as she saw him sitting there. It was almost as though he had come back from the dead.

It came to her then how long the past four weeks had been and how she had suffered. "I could never live through it again," she said to herself. She was thin and haggard from worry and loss of sleep, but her joy

at his recovery illuminated her face, making it most beautiful.

She followed him to the porch where she stood for a moment feasting her eyes upon him. "I'm not going to sit down now, Jim. You must have something to eat. It is very early but I'll get breakfast. I don't wish my foolish boy to be ill again. Don't sit up until you're tired. That will do you harm. You had better come in in a few moments and lie down on the davenport."

"Yes," he said.

She went back into the kitchen and turned on the drafts of the stove and began preparations for breakfast. Never before had the world seemed so beautiful to her. Jim was really well again. Nothing else mattered since he was left to her. She had been worried about money matters. Her cheeks flushed with shame at the thought. Money, luxuries, the home were not matters to cause concern. She would never allow them to cause her a moment's worry again.

She brought out her best table cloth and

took down the finest pieces of china in honor of Jim's recovery. She laid the table so that it looked like a picture and as she moved about, her heart was singing a little song of joy and thanksgiving.

"There! that does look nice," she exclaimed when all was finished. "I'm glad I saved last night's cream, though I didn't think *Jim* would use it." She tripped through the hall to the porch. "Breakfast's ready, Jimmy! You'd better lean on me. You don't know how weak you are."

Then she stopped. Jim was standing by one of the pillars. His watch was open in his hand and his eyes had a peculiar far off expression. "There's Number Ten now," he said. "She's done well to make the run if she was an hour late at Ridgway. We've orders for eight-fifteen. We'll pull out in a minute."

He raised his hand, gave a conductor's signal for starting and then turned and looked straight into his wife's eyes, bewildered and confused as though his mind was

crying out to her for help. She partly understood, but not all. She slipped her hand under his arm to steady him. "Come to breakfast, Jim. I have lovely fresh eggs for you. Mrs. Miller sent them in yesterday. Doctor Heiner said you might have eggs." While her lips were busy encouraging him, her heart comforted herself with the thought: "He's had such a shock, it may take him several days to realize what has happened. I shall not mention that he has been hurt or has been ill until the doctor comes."

Putting aside her own fears and weariness, she served his meal and talked lightly of the little matters of the home and children. "I shall bring it back by degrees," she encouraged herself. "I'll talk as though nothing had happened and after a while the past will be clear to him."

"Thomas has never missed a day asking about his red box or his new safe. You remember you promised him a new safe the next time you came in."

"A new safe?" he smiled placidly as though the subject pleased him.

"Yes, Jim, don't you remember? You took his red tin box in which to put the money. You hid the money somewhere. Don't you remember about it?"

"No; I don't know anything about a red box or the money. I don't know anything about it. Was I to know?"

He looked so distressed that Alice's heart smote her. "No; you were not to remember particularly," she said.

But her words did not comfort him. His glance wandered from her to articles about the room as though he would find there what he sought and then back to her again. His eyes were like those of a wounded animal who begged mutely and without avail for help.

"Let me break this egg for you, Jim. Isn't that lovely? You must eat every bit of it so that you will get strong."

So with gentle persuadings, he finished his breakfast and then she went with him to the

porch where they sat hand in hand and waited for Doctor Heiner's early call. She decided that she would say nothing at all to the physician, but let him find his patient as he was.

It was past eight o'clock when he came down the street, his shoulders hunched forward and his nearsighted eyes blinking in the rays of an August sun. He did not recognize the occupants of the porch until he had turned in at the gate.

"Well, well, what is this?" he cried, half angrily. "My, but this is rash! Why did you let him do it, Alice?" She made no answer but waited. He turned to Jim. "I suppose you feel all right, but I've a notion to lay you across my knee for getting up without my knowing. How's the pulse?" His finger was already upon Jim's wrist. He drew out his watch. In an instant the patient's watch—the watch with the broken mainspring and its hands marking the time at eight-fifteen—was in his hands.

"I've orders to pull out at eight-fifteen.

That's Number Ten whistling now. We'll pull out in one minute." He was on his feet, erect and stalwart. He raised his hand to signal, then turned and looked first at his wife and then at the doctor—with the look of a wounded animal in his eyes. But there was no help for him there. He sank back in his chair.

A look passed from wife to physician. She understood the condition without a word. To live with the mind a blank—to know not that she cared and waited upon him! To be a giant in body but an infant in mind! She pressed her lips tight. She would not give up. She would hope against knowledge. Her love would do more than a doctor's skill. Yet in spite of her effort, fear conquered hope. Her lips trembled and her eyes filled with tears. With a cry of "Jim, Jim," she was on her knees by his chair, her face buried against him, while her body shook with sobs. He put forth his hand and smoothed her hair. His own lips trembled; he looked up piteously at the doc-

tor while his mind made a mighty effort to break its chain. It was all in vain. He turned and patted the bowed head. He could not cry out, "Allie, Allie!" He had forgotten even her name.

CHAPTER V

A NEED FOR THE LITTLE TIN BOX

Soon other considerations than that of waiting upon her husband presented themselves to Alice. She had been getting her household necessities at the store on the book as every other workman's family in town did. She had given no thought about a settlement. When pay day came, she missed the check to which she had been accustomed. There was no prospect of wages for months, if ever; but there were eighteen hundred dollars in the little tin box, and that would provide for them until Jim was able to work. She had not given up the idea that Dr. Heiner was all wrong and that Jim's memory would gradually awaken. She questioned him about the hiding-place of the money. His reply was a smile and a gentle

pressure of her hand. He seemed unhappy when she was absent so she arranged her work to be with him. He went with her from parlor to kitchen, from cellar to bedroom, always with the same gentleness of manner and sweetness of smile. The children had learned to adjust themselves to circumstances and played together, amusing themselves with their childish games, and claiming the attention of their mother as little as possible.

When the money was needed, Alice began a diligent search for the box. It was of a size large enough to prevent it being slipped into an extremely small space. She began to search in the bedroom for it was there she had heard him moving about when he had hidden it. She went through every drawer and closet, and moved each article of furniture, turning it about and searching in every nook and corner. So diligent and thorough was her work that a pin could not have escaped notice; but the box did not materialize. So on she went through every room of

the house and into the cellar, although she knew he had not gone there. Then in a fit of desperation, she took up the carpet and examined every foot of the floor in the hope that he might have loosened a board and hidden the box beneath.

When hope of finding it by searching was given up, she turned to him and said in her old care-free manner, "Jim, do tell me where you hid the box. I'm tired hunting."

The answer was the same as it had always been. "I have no tin box."

Then with the most delicate tact, she tried again to bring the money to his mind. She sat beside him and repeated the incident of that evening, weaving the facts into a story about a man named Jim and Allie, his wife, and when she came to the climax she cried gayly: "Now, where do you suppose he hid the box?" With all her efforts the result was the same. He had forgotten even the first of the story.

The first week in September, the mail brought her a formal notice that the sum of

fifteen hundred dollars was due on the house and lot and unless payment was made the place would be sold. This aroused her. Again she beseeched and pleaded with her husband to tell her of the money. But nothing was gained.

She remembered the piece of paper which he had in his hand the day of the accident. Perhaps it might bring back some of the past. Taking it from the little trinket box, she placed it where his eyes must fall upon it. Then she laid it in his hand and said coaxingly, "Look at this, Jim. *Telluride, Mexico*. Who is there? Did you wish to write to someone there?"

"No; I didn't," he said.

In her perplexity, she went to Doctor Heiner. "There is but one hope," he said. "His loss of memory has been caused by a nervous shock. I feel confident that there is no concussion or compression of the brain. If there were, we could make that right in a short time. I believe his condition is the result of a nervous shock. A

second shock might be the means of restoring him. There are one or two incidents in medical history which makes such theories acceptable.”

That was all he could do for her. Theories would neither cure her husband nor feed her children. Taking care of these three, all equally helpless, was the duty that now confronted her. She knew not where to go for help. One thing she decided, she must not rest on the hope of Jim's being able to help her. She had given that up. From this time on she must be the head of the family.

The question of the mortgage was to be settled at once. She went to Mr. McCormick, a lawyer who had known her father and mother during childhood. He was an old man now with hair whitened with years and a character ripened and mellowed by a lifetime of sacrifice. He could give her no encouragement. The foreclosing of the mortgage was but the fulfilling of the law.

“The place was worth twenty-five hundred when we took it. Jim has put over five hundred dollars of work and repairs on it. The street has only been opened a short time and every one says the property has doubled in value. It’s worth almost four thousand dollars now. Must it all go for fifteen hundred?”

“There’ll be a sale. The property will go to the highest bidder. Ruley will wish to buy it in, of course. But,” the old man paused. He was old now and his body was crippled and twisted out of shape. He had thought to keep far from the worry and strife of business, for he had been at it early and late. All he longed for now was a little quiet, an hour for reflection, an hour of peace. But he pushed his desire away as the outcome of selfishness, and comforted her by saying, “But there is a way to make Mr. Ruley pay dear for his whistle. The property may be bid up close to its real value. He may get the amount of the mort-

gage but no more. There may be a little left to tide you over until Jim is himself again."

Jim himself again? She knew that they only spoke so to encourage her and not in the belief that it would be so. She herself knew that the time when Jim was himself again would never come. Although she was hopeless, she would not make it known to the world. So she smiled bravely and answered with all the cheerfulness she could command, "Yes; just enough until he is himself again. But, Mr. McCormick, how shall I arrange to have it bid higher?"

"I'll see to that, Alice. I'll attend the sale and bid with the others. I'll see that you will have at least a few hundred dollars."

She was so relieved. She could have time then to look about her to see what she could do. She could not leave her home and go out to earn, for the children and helpless man needed her every moment. But there was sewing and washing and ironing. She

grew sick at heart at the mere thought of washing. She had found it a tax on her strength to wash even for her own small family and Jim in his great good-hearted way had made her give it up and had even given her tubs and wringer away lest she be tempted to overtax her strength. But now matters were different. Necessity would know neither taste nor strength.

She arose and made ready to leave the office. "We can stay in the house until the sale," she said. "Then I suppose we must go. I will not be able to live in this part of town. I must get a smaller house; but I do hope I will have a yard for the children's sake and for Jim's. Laura and Thomas have been used to it and Doctor Heiner said Jim must be in the air. I thought of a garden. Perhaps—"

"I've been thinking of a place. It came to my mind while you were talking. There's two rooms down and two above. It's just rough boards, without weather claps or paint. But there's a stretch of grass in

front and a garden in the rear. Do you know where the old mill-house stands near the mouth of the Run?"

"Do you mean up Paddy's Run; the place built for the men that worked on the mill?"

"Yes; but the mill has gone now and with it the need of the house. That is vacant, Allie. There are balsams and pines at the foot of the hill—the very place for growing children and a sick man. The place belongs to me. If you wish it, you may make use of it."

"And the rent?"

He dismissed the subject with a gesture. "I played with your grandparents when we were all little six-year-olds; and I loved your mother when she was a little toddling, blue-eyed, yellow-haired girl. Do you think I could charge her daughter for living in a place that I can make no use of?"

Tears of relief came to her eyes. All had been so dark and now the way was clearing before her. Her lips trembled. "You're so good—so noble—" she began.

"I am glad to hear you say so, Alice. When I was young, it came to me suddenly that I could have nothing but a crippled, distorted body. The knowledge fairly stunned me at first but after a while I was reconciled for I determined that my life should make up for what my body missed. It does me good to hear you say that I am good and noble. When a young person says that to an old, old man, it makes him believe that perhaps the long seventy years have not been wasted."

She could not put her thoughts into words; but she held out her hand and he held it within his own.

"This trouble has been hard for you and Jim," he said. There was no pathos or even sympathy in his voice. He spoke in a practical tone as one speaks of practical things. "But however hard, one must learn to bear it patiently."

"I have not complained," she said. "Surely I have borne it patiently!"

There was a touch of irritation in her

voice, as though she felt that he criticised her in her thoughts.

He understood. "No, you have not complained. You have done well and yet, Alice, it seems to me that you have borne it as one bears a great wrong that has been done to her. There is a better way, my child, a far better way."

She made no reply; but her expression showed her lack of credence.

"It is to bear it as a trial sent to you by an All-Divine Providence which will ultimately result in the greater good to those who serve the Lord, my child. Believe that, and bear this trouble not with resignation in your heart but with hope and faith."

She shook her head in negation of such a philosophy. "I cannot see what good may come of rendering Jim helpless and driving us from the home we have worked and saved to get."

"Neither can I see it, now; yet I know it is so. There is where your faith must serve you, daughter—the substance of things not

seen. I have lived many more years than you, Alice, and declare now that those things which came to me as trials were blessings. It was my own dullness of perception that made them seem other than they were."

"I wish I could think so. But I cannot. Why should Jim, who never said an unkind word to anyone, who worked and planned to give his children a good home and opportunities which were denied him, why should *he* be stricken, while scores of other worthless men go on their way doing harm to everyone?"

"It is beyond me to know, Alice, yet I know that in the end you and Jim and the babies will be the gainers. I suppose to an ignorant person it seems a waste to throw gold into a furnace, but the smelter knows what means must be used to gain the desired end.

Perhaps you and Jim, with all your work and sacrifice, saw no further than yourselves and your babies. Who knows but an All-Seeing Providence felt that you were too

fine material to be lost; and sent this warning to you that you might know that the works and plans of man are nothing, for over all rests the palm of the Lord?"

Again she shook her head. "I wish I could think so, but I cannot. Perhaps the time may come—"

"The time *will* come; it may be delayed for years, yet the time will come when you will believe this," and he arose to open the door for her.

On her way home, she stopped at Mr. Ruley's office to tell him that the mortgage could not be met, and that he must proceed as the law allowed him. She had a few days of grace yet. If only the money could be found! As she passed a tin store, she went in and purchased a tin box in color and size similar to the missing one. Then she changed her last five-dollar bill to one dollar notes.

"I'll try once more. Perhaps this will make him remember."

She renewed her courage and was brisk and smiling when she entered her home.

“What do you think has happened, Jim?” she cried. “Lane’s bank has failed! I went and drew out the money. See, here it is!” She displayed the few paltry dollars. “I’ll roll them and put them in this box so that they will be safe from mice and damp. Will you hide them for me? I’m afraid to have so much money about me.”

She put the box into his unresponsive hands. He gazed at it for some minutes, perplexed and uncertain. His mind seemed groping about to find that which was lost. For an instant there was a passing gleam of the old intelligence—like a ray of sunlight in a dark room. Then the shadows came again, and he stood uncertain, bewildered, struggling.

Alice stood waiting. What had occurred once might again. The room was so still that she could hear her own heart beat.

Again came that fleeting bit of light.

When it came, Jim turned and with the box in his hand passed out into the kitchen. There was the old resolute manner and bearing in his movements. Without hesitation, he passed through the kitchen and on down the walk toward the woodshed. She followed far enough away that her presence would not recall his thoughts to the present, and yet near enough that she might see where he placed the box.

It came to her as she crossed the back porch that the same night that he had hidden the money, he had passed through the kitchen and out through the back yard just as he was doing now. He had gone into the shed that evening and had chopped kindling. Perhaps, after all, he had carried the box with him.

He came close to the shed door. The axe was in the chopping-block as he had left it weeks before.

Dropping the tin box among the chips and wood, he seized the axe and began to chop.

as though his life and safety depended upon this work.

Alice's heart sank. Her last hope of finding the money had left her.

CHAPTER VI

INTO THE NEW HOME

A few days later the notice of the sale was posted about town and on the side of the house. In due time the people gathered about the premises, examining the house from attic to cellar and measuring the width and depth of the lot.

Alice felt that she could not witness the actual sale nor did she wish Jim to meet curious eyes of strangers. With the children and her helpless husband, she went to a friend's house several squares distant. They had gone early in the day, but a short time before the hour fixed for the sale she became anxious about Mr. McCormick's being present. It might be that Mr. Ruley would have matters in his own hands. The law required two bidders to make the sale

legal. But Ruley could easily arrange such a matter were he disposed to do so.

She slipped away from her friend's house, leaving Jim and the children there, and went back home. A little crowd had gathered about the front porch on which the sheriff stood, and a number were grouped about the yard, trampling down the vines and flowers and scattering empty tobacco bags and cigar stumps over the grass. The sight was enough to make her heartsick. It was with a feeling of relief that she remembered that the plants, the bushes and the lawn were no longer hers.

She looked about hurriedly for the old lawyer and at last saw him sitting by the open window of the parlor, his twisted hand resting upon his cane.

When she had started out she meant to return to her family at once, but uncertain as to the outcome she remained. She took her place in a secluded corner of the hallway where she could hear the business transacted on the porch.

The sheriff began his work with the description and location of the property with all the whys and wherefores necessary to law. Then the bids began. Someone in the crowd began at a thousand dollars, which was closely followed by a second bid of twelve hundred.

Alice peered from the corner. She smiled sadly to herself when she recognized who had made these bids—two men who had never been able to provide a decent month's living for their families. She knew that neither of them had a dollar nor a dollar's credit. "They are working for Ruley," she said to herself. As though in answer to her thoughts, the voice of Ruley himself was heard raising the bid to fifteen hundred—the amount of the mortgage he held against the place.

The sheriff dwelt at length on the value of the property. A half hour passed in his auctioneering, yet no bids came. Alice trembled. Was she to lose every penny of what they had paid in? Why was Mr.

McCormick silent? The sheriff raised his hammer.

“Two thousand dollars!” said Mr. McCormick.

“I’ll raise it one hundred,” cried Ruley, who was concerned now that he realized that Mr. McCormick was not present as a mere spectator.

“I’ll make it twenty-three hundred,” said the old attorney quietly. Ruley again raised and so the price went up between them, by steps of a hundred dollars at first and at last by half that amount.

“Thirty-five hundred,” was Ruley’s bid. At this Mr. McCormick dropped from the contest. This last bidding had not lasted a quarter of an hour. Alice’s heart grew lighter as the price rose.

“We can manage on that,” she whispered to herself. It had not been the mere bread-and-butter phase of living which had concerned her most. She was thinking of help for Jim.

When the sheriff at last brought down the

hammer, she slipped through the house and went back to her husband and the babies, homeless but not despondent. She would have a little money—enough to bring the best medical aid to Jim. He would recover and they would start in again at the bottom of the ladder and for a second time build up a little home.

The transfer of the property was made and the money paid into her hand. There had been some expense connected with the sale to which she was liable. So in all there was less than two thousand dollars paid into her hands.

She put it into the bank and then went to Dr. Heiner.

“I have not been satisfied about Jim,” she said. “I have the money from the sale of the house. I wish you to send for the finest specialist you know, for I feel that Jim can be helped.”

“You are hoping against certainty, Alice. If there was hope of Jim’s being helped, the railroad men would have had a specialist

here long ago. You will spend your last penny and nothing will come of it. Be advised by me. Keep Jim in the air, employed if you can, but at least contented and happy. All your thought and care can do no more for him than that."

But she would not take the advice.

"At least write to some specialists—I know neither their names nor where to find them—and tell them how Jim is and what caused it. Ask opinions about it. Then if they say nothing can be done, I'll not bother you. Will you do that for me?"

"I'll do that. I'll write not to one but to several men that have the reputation of understanding the nervous system and the brain. If one holds out a hope, Alice, we'll have them here to see Jim."

"You'll write soon? You won't put it off?"

"I'll write to-day. I promise you that."

She left the office partly satisfied. Dr. Heiner began at once on the letters. He repeated the story of the accident and said

the man was suffering from loss of memory from the nervous shock. He wrote that sentence not as a supposition on his part but as a statement which had been proved. He left no way open to those to whom he wrote—gave them no idea that the loss of memory might have resulted from some other cause. His confidence in his diagnosis put himself and the specialists wrong. A similar answer came from all; nothing could be done. Time alone might help the afflicted man; the science of medicine and surgery was powerless.

Before Alice began her moving, she made another search of the premises. The little tin box was somewhere about; but she could not find it. As she put her household goods in order, she had the box always in mind. Though box and trunk and chest were emptied and repacked, the box and the money were not found.

She walked down the street with Jim while the men came to haul the household goods. She feared that the sight of this

home-leaving might agitate him, so they were gone all morning, walking along the river road. The children were busy gathering the little field daisies while she walked hand in hand with Jim, answering his smile with a smile. She talked with him about every subject that came to her. She called his attention to the flowers by the path or the birds that took wing at their approach. Whatever her words, the result was the same. He smiled up at her and pressed her hand closer in his own. So they wandered about all morning. At noon they came back, but not to the old home. Friends had put the mill-house in order. When Alice came in with Jim and the children, the stove was up, the table set, and the dinner itself ready to serve.

Alice watched her husband closely, hoping that the sudden change of environment might arouse him, but in this she was disappointed. He sat down at the table, seemingly unconscious that a change had taken place in his surroundings.

Thomas laughed and talked about the new home. Laura prattled and asked many questions which the mother found difficult to answer. The father heard their words but gave no heed. Since the accident he had never noticed the children's presence. They had climbed up on his knee and wound their arms about his neck, and he endured their caresses but did not return them.

Alice let them go in their own way, neither encouraging nor discouraging them. She was afraid that they might forget the father of the months before, and would grow fearful of this man who sat silent and irresponsible to their caresses.

The mill-house stood a half mile up the Run at the foot of the lofty heights of the Alleghenies. The mountain rose like a great wall back of it—green in the sunlight and black and sullen and foreboding at night. The heavier timber had been cut years before. The heights were marked with a pine and hemlock growth, the fragrance from which was borne down the slopes and into

the valley. The air was clear and bracing, putting ambition and energy into the mind and frame.

The house itself consisted of four great rooms; two above and two below. It was not plastered but lined with builder's paper over which was pasted the ordinary wall paper. A roughly made porch ran the length of the house and faced the stream. A cleared spot which had been gardened several seasons, but now overrun with weeds, extended up the mountain side, and was fenced with stumps which had been drawn to make room for the mill and house and yard.

Alice put the place in as good order as she could. She kept Thomas and Laura busy in clearing the stones from the place before the door. Although it was now the last of September, she set out hardy vines about the house and fence, hoping by the next season their tendrils would make beautiful that which was now bare and unsightly.

Jim was always by her side. Once or

twice the old intelligence came like a reflected ray of sunshine. At such times he took the spade from her hand and dug and planted as she had been doing. After such experiences Alice's spirits revived. Some time the past would come back.

Her work was constant and some times heavy. During the winter she sewed for families in town, and baked bread and rusks. She did whatever work she could, considering neither the limitations of time nor physical strength. There were days when evening found her nerves and body exhausted, yet it mattered not how worn and tired she was or how irritable her nerves, her voice was soft and gentle as she talked with Jim; and she returned his smile and caress as in the old times when she had his love and strength to protect and nothing to annoy or weary her.

She earned a few dollars a week with her sewing and baking, but not enough to provide the necessities for this family of four. Little by little a dollar from the money which

came from the sale of the house was spent. She saved in every possible way and considered well before she used a penny. She worried every time she drew on her fund, for she had always in mind the ambitions which Jim had for Thomas. As far as she was able, she meant to do everything for the children which Jim would have done. The money in the bank would help Thomas to a medical school if she could save it.

The first winter was not nearly so strenuous as it might have been. She was not worn out and she still retained her hope of everything coming to pass as she desired it. The children had been well provided for in the way of clothes and needed little. Jim too had several good suits and overcoats. So they were comfortable and well-clothed without any great expenditure.

When summer came, she took some of her own old dresses and made them over for Laura. This left her narrowed down but to two or three dresses, one of which was the white linen she had worn the last evening

Jim had been himself. This dress she could not bring herself to wear again although she needed it badly. She kept it well-bleached and ironed. Although she was hardly conscious of her reason for clinging to it, yet the thought was with her that she could not wear it again until Jim was himself. She still kept the little slip of paper with the address Telluride, Mexico upon it. Several times she had taken it from its place and begged her husband to look at it. He did as she requested and smiled at her and, then turning, smoothed the soft hair which touched his arm.

For weeks during the winter the roads to town were snow blocked. Day after day she sat in the house with Jim and the children. If she was not sewing, she told them stories or invented games to make the long days pass quickly. Often she sat with Laura in her arms, Thomas leaning against her knee and her husband sitting in a chair by her side, his hand in hers.

The mountains gave her a sense of se-

curity. The old road up the mountains to the lumber camps had not been used for years. She could mark it now by the heaps of drifted snow.

When the season opened again, her friends and neighbors came down from town. They were at loss what to do for her, for she seemed to need neither encouragement nor help, for her hope was beyond theirs and her manner and face showed no mark of suffering or sorrow. But one or two discerned the firmer curve of her lips and the stronger light in her eyes. She had set herself firmly that Jim would get well and that she would take care of him and the children until he did. How long that time might be or how she might accomplish her purpose did not come to her. She meant to do it regardless of all handicaps.

The only time she showed any feeling on the subject was when a friend said to her, "Allie, are you not afraid to be here alone with him? You do not know what turn his affliction may take. He might harm you or

the children. The burden of taking care of all is too much for you. You could put him in an institution—”

He did not finish the sentence. Alice turned to the children and said quietly: “Thomas, you and Laura pick a basket of chips for mother and start the fire for supper.”

When they had gone from hearing, she turned to her visitor. Her eyes were snapping with indignation. “Never again say such a thing before the children! Not for worlds would I put the idea of fear in their little heads. Do you think that I could ever be afraid of Jim? Why, he never harmed anyone or said an unkind word in all his life. As to putting him away—”

She stood up and flinging out her hands, cried with spirit, “As long as I’m able to stand—as long as I’m able to crawl about, Jim stays with me. Do you understand? He did everything in the world to make me happy and do you think I would leave him when he’s helpless? No; not for an hour!”

It was easy to be spirited and decided when others were there, and she kept up bravely even when alone. But the greatest factor of her sorrow was not the loss of home or luxuries.

"Jim," she said one day. "Who am I?"

He smiled but attempted no answer.

"What's my name, Jim?" She put her arms about his neck, and looked up into his face as she repeated the question: "What's my name, Jim? What do you call me?"

He smiled again and touched his hand to her hair. Again and again she tried to have him call her by name, but her efforts were in vain. The Alice of the old days had no part in his life. After one of these fruitless attempts, she flung herself face downward on the couch and sobbed until her body was shaken. She could have stood suffering, poverty and work if he would have called her "Allie," as of old.

Her tears and sobs troubled him. He stood beside her with the piteous look of a hunted animal. His lips quivered and grew

white as he knelt and laid his cheek against her tear-stained one. It was all he could do. "Jim, dear—call me—Allie—do say Allie, just once, Jim!"

Tears of suffering came to his eyes. He shook his head, bewildered and perplexed. He could not recall her.

CHAPTER VII

THE LUMBER ROAD

Several years passed, marked by no change except that Alice was wearing out from the constant attendance upon her husband and the steady work without recreation of any kind. Each year more money was needed for necessities. It took more time and material for the children's clothes and their growing bodies demanded more food. Each year more of the fund was withdrawn from the bank. Alice could economize as far as her own wants were concerned and deny herself even the necessities, but she could not let the sacrifice touch Jim and the children. She wore her plain dark cambric dresses through summer and winter. The bits of ribbon and lace

and finery she had worn as a young married woman were now utilized for Laura.

Thomas had been in school four years. He was a slender, delicate boy of a sensitive, refined disposition. He had justified his father's early hopes of him, for he loved books and was a born student. He was a quiet boy. Perhaps he realized the conditions about the house more than his mother suspected, and the knowledge weighed upon him, giving him the quiet, serious mind of one years older.

Laura was eight, and as light and airy of disposition as a butterfly on the wing. She was as delicately featured and beautiful as a figure in Dresden china.

Leading up the mountain side from the mill-house was the road over which lumber had been hauled years before. It was grass-grown now and wild berry vines grew over it; yet there was neither timber nor heavy underbrush. On the very crest of the mountain was the old camp of the lumbermen. It was built of round logs with windows which

swung outward and a rough door was fastened with a latch made from a slab. It had been built to accommodate a half-hundred lumbermen. There was an immense kitchen and dining-room, beyond which was a lobby with wooden bunks built around the walls. The five-leaved ivy had covered one end of the building and in the cleared space before the door were two giant oak trees.

The walk up the mountain side was a long and hard one, but it offered a wealth of beautiful scenery and invigorating air.

Since the summer that Thomas was six he had taken this walk with his father. When the berries were ripe, they picked a basketful as they wandered along, and when they reached the camp in the woods, they sat down on a rock under the oaks and ate their lunch.

The second summer that such journeys were taken, Thomas worked with a new purpose in mind. Picking berries was no longer a pastime, but real work. With his father, he started out early in the morning

and picked all day long. With evening they came down the mountain road, the boy staggering under his load and almost fainting for sheer weariness.

When he had eaten his supper and made himself clean, he started out for town to sell the berries, peddling them from door to door.

Alice stood in the doorway watching him until he had turned the bend of the road. A boy eight years old, peddling from door to door! Neither his father nor she had planned such a life for him. He came home tired, but before the summer was over his muscles had grown hard and strong, and the sensitive nerves were forgetting their own existence.

When berries were unseasonable, there were flowers or ferns to be gathered. So all summer Jim and his children lived on the mountain side.

The only irritability that Jim had shown during these seven years was in the presence of strangers. He grew nervous and

uneasy then and the appealing looks he gave his wife were those of one who felt that he was not as others.

Alice did not often subject him to this unpleasantness, for she permitted but one or two old friends to come to the house in the wood. It was always with a feeling of relief that she watched the children and their father start out for a day on the mountains. He seemed glad to go and she knew that he was safe for that day at least.

At intervals she attempted to recall his mind to the past, but without results. When the children were asleep or in bed—for she would not in their presence suggest that anything was amiss with their father—she asked him of the hidden money, trying by every means in her power to lead his thoughts back. She kept the little slip of paper with the address on it, and again and again brought it out and called his attention to it. Always when his eyes rested on the paper, he looked up at her piteously, and for the instant she fancied she saw the light

of intelligence pass like a ray of sunlight.

Each day was a new day to him; each hour, a new hour. His mind held neither past nor future, only the single present moment, and even that was not fully comprehended.

There was one exception; one moment of the past remained. He yet carried his time-piece with the broken mainspring and the hands which always pointed to eight-fifteen. Whenever his eyes rested upon its face, he spoke of Number Ten being long past due, and wondered what kept her late. He gave his signal for the train to pull out just as he would have done had grace been granted to him seven years before.

Alice often felt as though she could not see him go through that pantomime, so she slipped the watch away and hid it for several months. It mattered little how busy she was or how tired she was in body and spirit, each moment that her mind had leisure its first thought was to plan something that might reach Jim.

It came to her one evening that she would move the hands of the watch and let him have it again. Perhaps he would be able to grasp the change and the shock might stir his benumbed faculties into life. She considered the matter well. The change might only annoy him, and she could not bear that. Several days passed before she could bring herself to make the change. When she did so, she laid the watch where he would find it when he dressed. She watched him closely. He put it on mechanically as he did the articles of clothing, and did not glance at the face.

Later when the opportunity came to her, she slipped it from his pocket and laid it face upward in his hand. He glanced at it, and then springing to his feet, declared that they would pull out in a few minutes. It had been the watch and not the time which had recalled his last conscious act.

The little fund of money was dwindling. There was enough to provide the necessities for another year, but little more. Alice

would not permit herself to think of her children's future. They trudged into town to attend the public school, but Alice saw nothing before them when they had finished that course except work without special preparation. She feared more for Thomas than for Laura, for he was not strong and was marked by a highly sensitive temperament which would make his struggle with the world a peculiarly trying one.

Not only the money was running low, but her physical strength also. She found that she was forcing herself to work which before had not tired her. The daily routine of the house, and sewing was burdensome. Each evening she was glad to go to bed at dusk; but even this brought no rest, for her mind was busy planning and contriving to make her strength and money last until she could prepare the children for their life work.

Mr. McCormick had read her well seven years before. Her mental attitude toward

the trials which had been sent upon her and her family had not changed. For several years she had performed each duty faithfully and had looked about her that nothing was left undone, but she did it for love of Jim and her children. She had not complained or asked help of anyone because her natural instincts were against whiners and beggars. Her love and her pride had caused her to fulfill her duty uncomplainingly and well; but there had never been a high sense of trust or faith in what she did. She had never once said to herself that this affliction had been sent upon them by a wise and loving Father, and though she could not understand the reason for this chastisement, she was willing to believe that it was wisely sent and would result in ultimate good. There was always a rebellious feeling in her heart when she considered the matter. Her great strong husband who had done his work well and always had a kind word for everyone, why should he be

stricken, and her innocent babies—why should they be deprived of a father's love and protection?

Her thoughts ran on such lines whenever she considered the subject. It was well for her that her hands and mind were busied; else her rebellious thoughts might have developed into a bitterness.

The children and their father had gone out early in the morning one spring day in search of the rhododendron, and the mother sat by the window overlooking the lumber road. Her fingers were busy with her sewing but her glance wandered toward the grass-grown route up the mountain side.

The sound of wheels reached her ears. Heavy wagons were coming toward the mill-house. She could tell that they had turned from the main road for there was the sound of creaking axles as the vehicles bumped over the rocky road.

In a few minutes several teams and rough wagons loaded down with boxes and crates

passed by her window. She could distinguish several objects—a coal-oil stove, several cots and mattresses. The wagons were piled high and the heavy draft horses strained every muscle as they started the ascent of the mountain.

When Thomas came in, she inquired if he had seen the teams or knew what they meant.

“I did not see them, mother,” he replied in his serious, quiet way. “We were on the edge of the road when I heard someone talking to the horses. When I heard them I turned down toward the old spring. We sat and rested there until the people had passed. We couldn’t see or be seen where we were sitting. I thought they might be a party of fishermen going out to the woods. I was afraid they might worry father, so we went down where they would not see us.”

This was the first time that the boy had suggested that his father was not as other fathers and needed to be cared for.

"That was the best thing to do," Alice said gently. "You must always take care of father, Thomas."

The coming of the hunters, as she supposed them to be, worried her more than she was conscious. They were in her thoughts before she fell asleep and she dreamed of them all night long.

The following morning when the children and their father were about to set out on their search for flowers, Alice suggested going with them for a short distance.

"I'll let my sewing lie," she said, embracing both children and husband in the smile that she had never let them miss. "We'll walk up the Run instead of going up the mountain. The walk will be fine, and you'll find different kinds of flowers."

Laura was delighted with the prospect of a change; but Thomas understood the reason for their not going up the mountain. Alice walked with them until they were safely on their way and then turned back to finish the sewing.

For several days, the teams made one trip each up the mountain road. One afternoon, one wagon laden with trunks and traveling bags passed by the door on the way up the mountain.

Alice laid down her sewing and waited. She had the feeling that her privacy had been intruded upon and that a change was coming to the old mill-house. She and her little family could not be again as they had been this seven years. She was not worried and anxious now but she was depressed and hopeless. Her husband's weakness would be before the eyes of strangers whose tongues might be busy with comment of herself and family.

The needle trembled in her hand until she could not take a stitch. At last the little garment dropped in her hand and her head fell upon the window-sill. For the first time in seven years she sobbed until the frail, little body shook with emotion. The pent-up rebellion of all these years broke forth in words, "Oh, why has the Lord sent this upon

me? Why could we not be left alone in our sorrow and affliction?"

The mountains raised their mighty heads in majesty before her as though they would have given her the answer if she would have lifted her eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh help.

As she sat overcome with this new trouble a three-seated light wagon turned toward the lumber road. The occupants were a gay set, but when they passed the mill-house their laughter and talk stopped, for sitting by the window was a worn, tired little woman with her head bowed in sorrow.

PART TWO

CHAPTER I

THE HOME IN THE CITY

The library was an immense room with long, narrow windows looking from the front on the paved streets and from the side on a narrow, brick driveway. Hundreds of finely bound volumes filled cases of polished wood, and from nooks and corners marble fauns and their like peered forth. The rugs were Persian and the few paintings were originals from master hands. The rich draperies were drawn before the windows to shut out the glare of the afternoon sun, and the room was in semi-darkness.

Coming into this room from the light-flooded hall, Mrs. Houston groped her way to the leather covered davenport and lay

down upon it for a few minutes' rest for she had risen early and had been busy until that moment. She had taken upon her own shoulders a score of responsibilities which rightfully belonged to others. She was a woman of middle age, wiry, nervous and energetic and was often misunderstood, for all her excellent qualities of mind and heart were hidden by a brusque, sharp manner. She repelled on first acquaintance; it took months to learn that she would deny herself leisure and all else to help another. Her luxuries and wealth made no strong appeal to her. She wanted air and sunlight with hygienic conditions and the freedom of a home. A dimity curtain-pleased her eye more than the most elaborate handworked Battenberg one.

"I don't care about it," she said brusquely one day to a friend who was showing her a collection of handmade laces. "It always brings to mind the tired eyes and jerking nerves of the one who has sat indoors for

months to work at it. I'd rather breathe fresh air one hour and rest my eyes on one growing oak than look at all the laces poor needlewomen have ever made."

Mrs. Houston was tired this afternoon and needed rest for she had promised to sing in the evening at one of the missions in the east end of the city. She closed her eyes and was dropping off into sleep, when a cough came from the front windows. It was a peculiar little cough as though the guilty party was doing her best to stifle it.

"Margery, is that you?" asked Mrs. Houston, wide awake in an instant.

"Yes, mother."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm sitting here back of the curtains reading."

"What?" The question was put in such a way that a casual hearer might believe that Margery would be inflicted with the severest punishment if her answer was not in accordance with her mother's ideas of

what was suitable for a young girl's ears. Margery gave the title of the ponderous volume which she was skimming through.

"Come here, Margery, please."

The girl came from behind the curtains. She was long and lank for a girl of twelve. Her shoulders drooped forward; her face was pale and thin, and her long braid seemed to weigh her down. She came across the room and stood beside her mother, waiting to hear what she might say. There was a respect and obedience in the girl's attitude and promptness that told of excellent breeding and training.

"I wish you would walk down to the farm for me. Tell Mr. Lykens to bring some new peas to-morrow and as much extra cream as he can spare."

"Couldn't you telephone?"

"I prefer you to take the message. On the way back stop at Mrs. Gardner's and ask her if she has a second copy of the music for this evening. If she wishes you to stay

a while and play with Rhoda, you may. You needn't hurry back."

"Mr. Gardner was making a trapeze for Rhoda the last time I was there. It was to be in the carriage shed. I wonder if he has it done."

"Perhaps. And, Margery, do not walk along the dusty road. If you go along the footpath by the river you will be cool and shaded all the way."

"Yes, mother." Margery was already in the hall putting on her flappy big sun hat. She coughed as she left the house but as usual did her best to stifle it, and succeeded so well that she almost strangled herself with the effort. She had had barely time to reach the corner when Mrs. Houston went to the telephone and called up Mrs. Gardner.

"I've sent Margery down on an errand," she said. "I'm not at all anxious about a second copy of the music for this evening. The songs are old and I know them; but I wished to get my little girl out into the air.

She's been indoors all day, moping over a book. I gave her permission to visit Rhoda if you asked her. I wish your Miss Athletics would teach her a few tricks on the trapeze or run her a race over the fields; anything to keep her moving out of doors."

That was all. Mrs. Houston went back to the couch and lay down again, closing her eyes in an effort to sleep. She had disposed of her daughter for the afternoon but worrisome thoughts of her held possession of the mother's mind. She was alarmed at Margery's condition and not without reason. The girl was growing fast, was tall beyond her years, and this rapid growth had robbed her of much of her strength. She was satisfied to sit curled up with a book until her shoulders stooped and a hacking cough annoyed her.

Mrs. Houston had spoken to the family physician concerning her. Acknowledging that the cough might develop into a disease, his advice had been to take the girl to a

higher altitude and to let her run wild in the open air.

Since the consultation with the doctor Mrs. Houston had looked about her for a suitable place. She disliked the fashionable summer resorts, feeling that the constant gayety and fine dressing would not build up Margery either physically or ethically. All available places were filled with summer boarders. So far she had been unable to find any place that suited her for Margery.

Nothing had been said of these things to the girl herself for the mother believed it unwise for a young person to let her mind dwell much on aches and pains; neither had she spoken of the matter to her husband. He was engrossed in business. His dinner hour and evening were the only times he could be home and she hesitated to intrude the family troubles upon his little leisure. So far as the management of the house and children were concerned, she was the head. She was accustomed to make her plans, see

to their arrangements and then lay the matter before him. He would listen attentively, nod approvingly while she talked and then respond, "Well, well, you surely have a good head for detail, Sue! You should have been a business woman. I don't see how you manage the children the way you do. Everyone who mentions our girl and boy say that they're the best trained youngsters to be found. I told Kendig the other day after he spent Sunday here that I didn't take any of the credit; I left that for their mother. The only credit I do take is that I selected the mother. Now, Sue, about this new plan. You and the children for it! How much money will you need?"

Supplying the money was as far as he assumed the responsibility. He knew that his wife would manage well without his suggestions or help and he left such matters in her hands.

But now she had reached a place where she could not act. She waited until the dinner was over, the children interested in their

amusements, and she was alone with her husband.

"Something must be done about Margery!" she exclaimed brusquely, as though she was blaming him and Margery for the condition of affairs.

"Why? Has she gotten beyond you, Sue?" He looked up from his paper and, in an attitude of attention, waited for her to continue.

He was a big, portly, good-natured looking man upon whom the cares of the world rested lightly. He was not one to go out to meet trouble and when it intruded itself upon him, he soon rid himself of its presence. Yet with his easy-going way, he was a power along certain lines. The name of Houston stood high in the lumber market. He knew the value of lumber from the green young sapling in the forest to the finished, polished article ready for a drawing-room. He made no pretense of knowing anything else, but he knew that he was master along these lines. He had been

brought up at the business; he had lived in the lumber-camps as a boy; he had surveyed land and scaled logs as a young man. Now, in middle age, his judgment was accepted when it came to the valuation of tracts of timber land, or the number of million feet of logs a certain section could produce. When the lumbermen brought down the rafts in the spring, he walked over the timber and said, "Oak—I'll give you eight hundred cash. Hemlock—not worth more than six hundred." His prices gave the jobbers a fair profit for their time and money, and he himself never lost by the transaction.

Now, when his wife did not answer at once, he repeated the question. "Has she gotten beyond you, Sue?"

"Scarcely! I had in mind her health."

"What's wrong? I didn't notice—"

"Of course you didn't! I didn't expect you to notice. But the child is growing too fast. She has no vitality and she has such an annoying cough."

"See the doctor," was his advice.

"I have. Do you suppose I would have bothered you if that was all there was to be done? I've been to Doctor Harter."

Then she related in detail what had taken place at the doctor's office and the advice which had been given to her. "Now, where am I to go?" she asked.

He looked as perplexed as though she had inquired of him where to find the golden apples of the Hesperides, and began an enumeration of the fashionable summer resorts.

"Nonsense, Fred! You don't grasp the situation! I want some quiet place high in the mountains where fashionable society will not intrude. I want the children to wear plain dark clothes, live out all day and run in their bare feet if they take the notion. Just three months of Indian life where they'll have nothing daintier than bacon and eggs."

"Oh, I begin to understand," he said at length. "It comes to me now about a letter I had from a young fellow up the road.

He's put the reins in our hand. What do you think of a camp on top of the Alleghenies?"

"Or an air castle? One seems about as probable as the other."

"The camp is practical. Let me tell you first about the letter from this young man. I don't know him, but he lives up towards the middle of the state. It seems he belongs to a club and so he wrote to ask if a party of them might have the use of the old hunter's camp at Paddy's Run. I intended to tell him to go ahead and make what use they could of it, but this opinion of the doctor about Margery gives another face to the matter. The camp must be a little run down but that can be easily attended to. What do you think of it?"

"It sounds good; but I'd like to know more about it."

"You shall know all I remember of it: a great log affair with bunks built in the lobby for beds and a cleared space of half an acre

about it so that there'll be no immediate trouble with snakes. But best of all, Sue, when you're there you can look down on the clouds in the valley below. It's so far away that the sound of civilization never reaches it and yet I think it is only four or five miles from the camp to the mouth of the Run. Up there you can wear flannels in July and you'll get so hungry that you'll eat anything that's set before you. There's the smell of pine and hemlock everywhere. Why, it's heaven's own land!"

His wife smiled grimly. "It's strange I never heard you tell of it before."

"I've been busy with other matters and haven't had time to think of it. But it's the very place for us all. I'll send some men up to clear it out and see what's needed to put it in order. We'll be comfortable and quiet for a few months. We'll go as soon as the place is fixed up. You'd better make out a list of what you'll need. There'll be cots and blankets—don't forget blankets,

Sue, though it is July—and bacon and eggs and coffee, and Jamison will take up a Jersey cow and we'll live like kings."

"Well, I'm surprised! You are more excited and pleased than the children will be when they hear the plans."

"That's because they've never been there. I've been homesick for the place. But perhaps you and the others will find it lonely. You'd better ask someone to go along. The place was big enough to hold a hundred men in close quarters."

"I thought of taking a party. Huldah must go along to cook and I thought of letting her ask one of the other girls—which ever one she could get along with best."

"Make out a list of supplies, but remember this, Sue; jot down what you think will be plenty and then double that amount. You'll find that will last you about half as long as you've counted on. It's a rule of camp that a man's stomach quadruples itself."

The conversation ended there. She turned away to get a book and pencil. So

far as she was concerned the matter was settled. She knew the camp would be put in order in the shortest possible time, and that it was left to her to have in readiness the household necessities, servants and guests.

When the children were ready for bed she mentioned the subject to them. Margery did not enthuse, but that was her way. Her quiet, "I'm glad of that," meant quite as much as William's joyous expletives.

When she left and the children were in bed, William carried on a conversation with his sister in the room adjoining. He had great schemes of what he would do on the mountain top.

"I hope there'll be rattlers, Marge! Don't you? I never killed one. I'd like to tell the fellows about it next year. I'd keep the rattlers, but you could have the skin for a belt."

Margery shuddered. "William, do talk something else! I can feel the snakes crawling about everywhere."

"Ralph Payne was camping once when a

panther sprang in on them. They were sitting around the fire and no one ever suspected that there was a panther anywhere. They shot it, of course, but not before one of the men got its teeth in his shoulder. I wish father would take some guns. We'll need them. What would we do if a bear would come walking into camp? I'm going to ask father to get me a rifle."

"And blow our heads off? Ugh!" Margery shuddered and hid her head beneath the bed clothes from which she soon emerged to exclaim, "William Houston, if you don't stop talking of such horrible things, I'll—" She could think of nothing dreadful enough to awe him.

"Old scarey!" he cried. "There'll be no fun if you girls are along. Rhoda will be all right. She has as much nerve as a boy. I wish mother wouldn't take any more along."

"I tell you whom I wish she wouldn't take along." There was real concern in Mar-

gery's voice as she spoke which was not the result of pique or whim.

"Who?"

"Uncle Doctor. Do you think she'll take him?"

"If she does, *I* won't go," said William.
"And mother won't be able to make me."

As if in answer to his bit of heresy, Mrs. Houston spoke from the hall below. "Not another word tonight, William."

"No, mother," was the reply.

CHAPTER II

PREPARATION FOR CAMP.

Margery was two years older than William but her attitude toward him was that of a middle-aged woman toward a little child. At rare intervals she quarreled with him after a childish fashion but such occasions were rare. Usually she admonished and advised him and went out of her way to be good to him.

"Maybe he doesn't feel good, mother," she would say when Mrs. Houston took William to task for some neglect of work. "He seemed so tired out. I'd let him sleep late," she would say cajolingly to the head of the house when William did not appear at the breakfast table.

She did everything in her power to please this younger brother, even to her choice of

friends. So far in her short life, she had found one thing she could not do even for William and that was to put the stretchy, ugly angleworms to the hook. She had tried it several times but had gotten no further than to take the distasteful things in her hand.

At the mention of the camping party, her first thought had been to invite Mabel Wade and Isabelle Geary, her most intimate friends in school. They were fond of painting and books and fancy work and they hated angleworms as much as she did. For the same reason that she was fond of these girls, William disliked them and objected to their being of the party. William's pleasure always first in Margery's mind, she put her own wishes aside and decided that Rhoda should be her guest and went at once to her mother. "I'll ask Rhoda, mother, for my guest, if you do not mind."

Mrs. Houston looked up in surprise from her accounts. She knew Rhoda, the outdoor girl, had little in common with Mar-

gery, the student. She hesitated before replying, for she felt that Margery would enjoy Mabel's and Isabelle's company, but perhaps Rhoda would do her the most good and for that purpose they were going.

"Ask whom you please," she said abruptly, turning back to her work. "I didn't limit the number. You may ask more."

"I think Rhoda will be enough."

A light suddenly came to Mrs. Houston. She knew that William could play the part of tyrant in his boyish way. She turned as Margery was leaving the room.

"Why does Will like Rhoda better than he does the other girls?"

"Because she isn't afraid. She baits hooks with those terrible wriggling worms! When she was in school last spring, she had her coat-pocket full of fish worms, and they crawled out over her desk." Margery pressed her lips tight after this statement, and with an effort suppressed a grimace of disgust.

“Does Mabel like worms, and skinning the cat?”

“No, she hates them almost as much as I do. But Rhoda is not afraid of anything. She used to handle all the old bones on the skeleton when we were studying anatomy. She did it to make us creep.”

“I wish you to ask Mabel and Isabelle to go with us. There’ll be room for all.”

The house was a scene of excitement for several days following the decision about going into camp. Mr. Houston had sent several men ahead to put the place in repair and to make out a list of articles needed for the comfort of the campers.

William was gathering his particular friends together to discuss the needs of one who lives in the wilds. Margery, more quiet but quite as active, was busy from morning until night. She had been willing to sacrifice her own pleasure about inviting only Rhoda, yet she could not help feeling glad that her mother had taken the matter

in her own hands. She was a strange, quiet girl with an abnormally developed sense of duty, who had been over-restricted and over-trained until the freedom of childhood had been lost. William thrived and was gay and happy under the same training but it was his nature to effervesce and bubble over with joy on the slightest provocation.

But Margery, with her highly sensitive organism, her ideas of duty and honor, needed no discipline. She would have developed better if she had been left without rules and laws. Her mother had recognized this truth for some months, and was doing all in her power to undo the effect of her over-discipline. She now tried to force upon her freedom of choice and manner.

"You'll need some indoor games and books for rainy days, Margery," said her mother. "You had better attend to that matter. I'll be busy with the necessities."

"Very well. What games shall I take and what books?"

"I'll leave that to you. They are to be for your amusement. Take what you wish."

"May I ask the girls to help me select them?"

"Do precisely as you choose. The matter is in your hand. When you need money, come to me." Then thinking better of it, she counted out some bills. "Use that; I think it will be enough to see you through. If it isn't, come to me."

Margery had barely quitted the room when William came in through a low window. He was whistling gayly, while Nero, the big mastiff, lumbered after him.

"I wish that dog kept out of the house, William."

"I can't do it. He won't stay anywhere without me." His face beamed with smiles as he met his mother's eyes. He thought he had settled effectively the question of Nero's presence in the house.

"Then stay outside with him. I will not have the floor tracked so." She turned

back to the housekeeping accounts with the air of one who has finished the interview.

William opened the low window.

"Come, go out, Nero!" The huge mastiff looked up into his master's face and seeing that he was in earnest, straightway walked out.

Coming back to his mother's desk, he asked: "Can I buy what I need for camp?"

"Make out a list. I'll look it over."

"But I'd rather do the buying! I'd make such bargains. I know how I'd save a good bit if I could buy what I wanted."

"I'm not at all anxious about the bargains, William! Make out your list, and I'll see that you have all that is suitable."

"You gave Marge—"

He did not finish the sentence for his mother gave him such a look that he ceased. "That is my affair and Margery's," she said curtly. "You and your sister are wholly different people."

"All right. I'll make out the list," he replied cheerily. "I'll see the fellows. Maybe

they'll think of something that I haven't."

"I don't doubt it," dryly.

"Say, mother, is Uncle Doctor going with us? If you haven't asked him, don't do it. We'll have ever so much more fun if he isn't along."

"Never mind Uncle Doctor now. It isn't wise to trouble yourself about matters which are really no concern of yours. If Uncle Doctor is to be there, he'll be there. You have invited your guests without question and your father and mother intend taking the same privilege."

"Oh, all right, but he makes me mad, but I'll keep away from him."

"Mabel and Isabelle are also going."

"Are they?"

To his mother's surprise there was a tone of eagerness in his voice. She had expected him to express a wish for their names to be taken from the list of guests. But she understood when he added gleefully, "Then look out for the fun! I can keep them racing over the mountain if I am only

lucky enough to get a little green wood-snake. Isabelle has a voice like a Comanche Indian."

"When did you hear a Comanche?"

"I meant she has a voice like I imagine a Comanche has. I'm going down to see Tom Jones and Warren Dehants. I've asked them and they'll be wild when they know those yellers are going. Whatever made Margery ask them?"

"Margery had nothing to do with it. I said that they should be invited."

He walked off crestfallen, for now the matter was out of his hands. He could have managed Margery, but his mother was beyond his control.

Margery, memorandum and pencil in hand, had gone for an interview with the girls. She felt weighed down by the responsibilities of so great a sum of money as her mother had given her. She would much rather have made out the list and had her mother suggest changes.

Fortunately for her peace of mind, Isa-

belle, to whom she went first, had not the same idea in regard to money. She heard Margery's story, looked upon the bills and cried out in excitement: "I wish I had so much to spend! You're a lucky girl, Margery. I never have more than a dollar at a time, and I do love to go shopping!"

Margery's heart grew light at these words and her countenance brightened. Spending money was a pastime then instead of a burdensome duty to be performed.

"I'm glad you feel the way you do, Isabelle. Then you'll go with me to the stores. I was afraid that you would not care to."

"Care to? Well, I think I shall! The next best thing to having money of your own to spend is helping some one spend theirs. Mother is in her room. I'll return in a moment."

In a short time she was back with Margery and ready to start. Rhoda and Mabel joined them later.



“You’ve made a nice job of it, keeping me in bed almost a week.” (See page 254.)

"Will says he's going to have a rifle if his mother lets him get it," said Rhoda. "I do hope he will. We could hunt for bears and panthers then."

"Do you suppose there are any near the camp?" Mabel asked, her cheeks growing pale at the mere thought.

"That's why I'm going," declared Rhoda. "If it wasn't for the hope of seeing a few wild animals and a copperhead or so, I'd sooner stay at home."

"You'll have to walk to see them," said Margery in her thoughtful, gentle way. "Father says that we need not be afraid of animals there. He would not send us there if there was any danger."

"I can scarcely wait until we start," said Mabel. "I've never been in a camp before and to be on the very top of the mountains will be romantic!"

"My father has been there. He said we could look down and see the clouds in the valley; but I don't understand how that can

be. I have a notion that he's teasing me," said Isabelle. "But clouds or no clouds, I intend having the time of my life."

"So do I! It seems to me that I cannot wait until we start. It will be so romantic—just like a novel," replied Mabel.

For a moment Margery was quiet. "I think I'll have a good time. I know I shall unless one thing happens, and if that happens, it won't be such fun."

The girls looked at her with eyes opened wide in surprise. "Do tell us, Marge. Is it something dreadful? Does your mother intend us to study? Will she take Miss Warner with her?"

"No, it will not sound so dreadful to hear me say it—but that's because you don't really know. You can't realize it until you have lived in the house with him. It's Uncle Doctor. I'm afraid mother will ask him to go along."

"Uncle Doctor! Who is he?"

"Just what he sounds like. He is moth-

er's half-brother and years and years older. Why, I suppose he's at least fifty! He's a doctor and he cuts people's arms and legs off and all that, and never seems to care a bit."

"Well, he won't cut mine off," said Isabelle. "He don't need to try his experiments on me, if that is what you're afraid of!"

"I wasn't thinking of that. Of course, he only does that when people are hurt. But when you see him, you'll know. Even Will is afraid of him."

"Does he beat you or swear at you?" cried Rhoda, eagerly. Personally, she would have enjoyed standing by and looking on at a game of fisticuffs.

"No, do you think he's a heathen? He's a gentleman, but he's different from other people. I never can get my voice above a whisper when he's near, and when I see how sad and miserable he is, I feel like crying. I've cried more than once," she

added, blushing at this confession of sentiment. "But he's had a dreadful sorrow, and it's made him touchy."

"What was it? Did he hurt someone? Maybe he got excited and cut the leg off the wrong man! I've heard of such mistakes," said Rhoda. To do the young lady justice, there was little of which she had not heard, and her knowledge was always at her tongue's end for the edification of those who cared to listen.

"He wouldn't do anything like that. He isn't just an ordinary doctor, Rhoda. He's known everywhere, and he's paid thousands of dollars to make people's backs straight, and their legs longer, and fix up their brains when they don't act right."

"What's his name?" asked Rhoda.

"His real name is Henry Brenhizer, but we call him Uncle Doctor. My mother thinks he's lovely and she makes a great fuss over him, but then she knows how sad he is and she told me that she sympathizes with him."

“Um—m,” said Rhoda. That word *sympathize* put her all at sea for she could not quite grasp its meaning. But being a creature thirsty for knowledge, she wasted no time until she asked pertinently, “What trouble did he have, Marge?”

“I can’t tell you now, Rhoda. It’s too long a story and we can’t talk and shop both, and we’re almost at Gray’s store. But I’ll tell you the whole story when we go into camp. Some night we’ll sit by the campfire and I’ll tell you what makes Uncle Doctor so queer.”

“By the campfire! That will be so romantic—just like a novel,” said Mabel.

The first of the week the party of campers set forth for the mountain heights, going by train to the railroad town, and then driving up Paddy’s Run to the old lumber road. As they turned into the Run, they came to the little old mill-house, now covered from foundation to roof by the rich green of the woodbine. As they drew near, they saw a woman with head bowed upon

the window-sill. Her sewing was in her hands, but her slender figure was shaken with sobs.

Instinctively the laughter and chatter died.

“How romantic—just like a novel!” said Mabel.

CHAPTER III

THE GIRLS MEET WITH AN ADVENTURE

There had been some discussion about a name for the camp. William and Tom Jones insisted upon a name which meant something to their ears, at least. They suggested Panther's Lair, Three Bears and The Rattler's Nest, but the girls expressed their dislike for the names in giving forth little affected shrieks of horror.

William was disgusted. "I suppose you girls would like to have it called Cosy-Corner or Rest-a-While-Lodge, or some such lady-like name!"

"What I think would suit them," said Tom Jones with his most serious air, "would be: The Yellers' Camp, The Lodge of the Shivers, or The Let-Me-Be, or The Don't-You-Dare Camp."

"It would make you yell, Tom Jones, if some one dropped a snake down *your* back," cried Isabelle.

"But it wasn't a snake, Isabelle. It was only the tendril from a wild grape vine. I told you what it was the moment you began to yell, but yell you would, and all about a little bit of a vine—afraid of a *vine!*"

"I *wasn't* afraid of the vine! I knew it wasn't a snake after you told me so, but it was the idea. Did the idea of something horrible never make you afraid?"

"No, nor anything else. If there had been a wildcat within hearing he would have turned and run until he would have dropped in his tracks from weariness."

"There's really little fun going into camp with girls," said William, "that is, some girls."

"If Isabelle isn't yelling, Mabel has cold shivers, or Margery is reading a lecture on *Don'ts and Do's*."

"And what about me?" asked Rhoda.

"You'll do," was the not too gracious reply. "You're just as afraid as the other girls, but you've got enough grit not to let on."

They were sitting on a shelf of rock some distance from the cabin. William made his little speech and then got up and moved away from the group. He made a wide circle so as to come up back of the girls. Had they not been so interested in the discussion of the camp name they would have noticed his actions and their suspicions would have been aroused.

"I'm not afraid of anything of that kind—snakes and bugs," said Rhoda decidedly.

"I'm not afraid either," said Isabelle. "It is only that the idea is so horrible. When I even think of snakes, I shudder, even though I'm home, cuddled up by the fireplace in the dead of winter. It's the idea of—"

She ended with a shriek, and sprang into the air. The other girls did not stop to inquire the cause of her sudden action, but

joined their voices with hers and raced after her across the narrow footpath leading across the mountain. After them, his face fiendish with delight, came William, holding in his hand a wriggling gutta-percha snake which he had provided before leaving home. He ran as fast as his legs could carry him, and the girls before him, crying, "He's coming, he's coming!"

Tom Jones stood on the rocky ledge to watch them. As the girls scrambled and tumbled through the bushes, he bent double in the excess of delight and shrieked with laughter.

Excited and panting for breath, Mabel turned down a side path and Rhoda followed, but Margery and Isabelle did not observe their course and plunged on down the mountain side.

William, whose purpose was to torment Rhoda, since she had been such a braggart about her bravery, followed her and Mabel.

Isabelle and Margery ran forward, screaming. The path soon ended in a little

thicket of trees, and into this the girls plunged, still thinking that the other girls and William were close behind. On and on they ran until Margery stumbled and fell from exhaustion. Isabelle stopped beside her.

"I don't care, let him come with that snake! He wouldn't dare put it on us. William will tease but he wouldn't go so far as to hurt anyone."

She seated herself at the foot of a great oak and rested against its trunk. Isabelle sank down beside her, turning as she seated herself to look back the way by which they had come.

"I did not think we were so far ahead," she panted. "Perhaps Will has become tired and sat down to rest."

They sat until they had recovered their breath and were ready for another run, all the while glancing apprehensively about them lest William would come upon them unawares with some new form of torment. But he did not appear on the scene, and

after being thoroughly rested, the girls arose and started toward the camp. They walked at a rapid gait, expecting William to pounce out upon them from behind every great tree.

Suddenly Margery stopped. "We didn't pass that spring on our way here," she said. "Isabelle, we're lost!"

"Oh, nonsense! How do you know what we passed? You were running so fast and thinking only of William. We might have passed a dozen springs and you would not have noticed. Come, let us hurry on. We may be further from camp than we think."

She increased her speed, and Margery of necessity followed. Isabelle was not a little disturbed about Margery's suggesting that they were lost, but she was brave enough to keep her forebodings to herself.

Suddenly Margery stopped for a second time. They had come to the decayed trunk of an oak lying across their path. "I'm sure we never clambered over that, Isabelle.

"We're lost! I was sure from the first that we were lost."

"We can turn back then and find the right way," was the answer given bravely as she faced about. "These paths lead somewhere, and we'll be sure to come to civilization if we keep on."

They turned and walked several miles, each with the hope in her heart that the next turn of the road might bring the camp in view. They were well tired out by this time and very hungry.

"It was William's fault," said Isabelle. "If he wouldn't have tormented us, we wouldn't be here."

"We shouldn't have run," was Margery's reply. William, with all his faults, in her eyes could do no wrong. "If we wouldn't shriek and yell so, he would not enjoy racing us. I would have known that it was only a gutta-percha snake if I had only stopped to think."

"Then why didn't you stop to think?"

said Isabelle tartly. She was worn out in body and worried in mind, and it was really a relief to put the blame on some one. They were wandering aimlessly now, peering about them from right to left, afraid of they knew not what.

“Do you think there might be bears—” began Margery, looking over her shoulder and then drawing closer to Isabelle.

“Margery Houston, don’t you dare mention bears or think of them, either! Wait until we get back to camp. I have enough on my mind without hunting for other troubles. Here’s a big rock. Let us rest before we go further.”

“I wonder what time it is!” said Isabelle.

“It must be almost dinner time. I noticed our shadows were very short as we stood in that little open space.”

“They will be ready for dinner at camp, and—” Margery began but was unable to finish.

“What are you crying about? Because

they are making ready for dinner? Well, I'm glad of it! Perhaps they will ring the bell so loud that we will hear it, and if we don't come, they'll know something has happened, and will come and look for us. I'm glad it is dinner time. We'll be found so much the sooner."

They waited but no sound came to their ears. Margery would have wept had not Isabelle prevented.

"What is the use of that, Margery? You will not see me cry if we stay out all night. They'll find us some time, for if we are not home soon they will send out searching parties. I'm not afraid of staying lost; but I'm hungry. I wish we had brought a lunch with us."

"But we didn't intend being lost," was the sage rejoinder, "so how could we have thought to bring a lunch?"

"Let us shout," said Isabelle at last. "Someone may be quite near and hear us. Now, ready, both together. Cry 'we're lost.'"

They raised their voices and shrieked aloud, "We're lost! We're lost!"

But no answer came. Again they shouted with the same result.

"There is little use sitting here. Let us start to walk again," suggested Isabelle.

Margery was in such a state of mind that she could not object, but passively followed. They walked slowly now for their limbs were almost too weary to carry them.

"I saw someone over there in the bushes," at last whispered Margery, clutching Isabelle by the arm. "I think it's a man, but it might be an animal."

"It might be the little Jersey cow that belongs to camp. If it is, we'll start her toward home. She'll know the way and we'll follow. I'll look in there and see." Parting the underbrush, she left the cleared space and moved toward the spot Margery had designated. Margery followed close at her heels.

"It's a man picking berries," said Isa-

belle. "He isn't a tramp for he is well-dressed and he has a bucket and tin cup. Come on!"

She came quite close to the stranger before he heard her. Then he looked up and smiled and turned his attention again to picking the berries.

"We're lost," said Isabelle. "Could you tell us how to reach the lumber camp at the head of Paddy's Run?"

The man had listened as she talked but made no attempt to answer.

"We're lost," she said with more decision in her voice. "Will you tell us how to get back to camp or to get somewhere?"

Again came the peculiar smile, but no words in reply.

"Can't you hear?" she shouted now with all the strength of her lungs. "We're lost—lost! Can you hear that? We want to go back to camp—the lumber camp. We've wandered about since eight o'clock this morning."

At the mention of the time, the man's face changed. It was as though a ray of sunshine had fallen over a shadowy place.

"I wonder why Number Ten is running late. Yes, I've orders to pull out in a few minutes. There she goes now!" He raised his hand, only to let it fall again. The baffled, worried look came for the instant to his eyes, then he smiled and turned to his berry-picking. At his first word the girls had clutched each other tightly. "He's crazy," whispered Isabelle, now thoroughly frightened.

"It's a crazy man. This is worse than being lost," cried Margery, making no effort to keep the words from his ears. He heard but heeded not; he had turned to his task of clearing the low blue huckleberry vines.

The girls were too frightened to move, but stood clutching each other tightly and watching the man as he worked.

As they stood so, the branches at a distance parted and a young boy came into the cleared space. He, too, had been picking

berries and his bucket was already filled. He paused when he saw the girls.

"What's the trouble?" he asked, noticing their fear.

"The man has frightened us. He's crazy," stammered Isabelle, too frightened to speak plainly.

The face of the boy flushed. "He's not crazy," he said. "He's had an accident—he isn't well." As though by these few words he had broken faith with his father, he went up to him and touched him on the arm. The man looked up and smiled.

"I'd sit down and rest, father. You must have been busy. Your bucket is almost full."

The man did not grasp the meaning of the words but he recognized the tender kindness of the voice, and he patted the boy's hand and then sat down as he was told.

"Ask him the way," whispered Margery.

"How did you come here? I didn't think there was anyone for miles about."

"We're lost. We raced away this morn-

ing from the lumber camp. We're camping there for the summer. Can you show us the way back?"

"I could show you the way back, but I'm afraid you would lose it again. There's not much of a path."

"How do you know the way? I should think you would get lost."

"I'm used to this side of the mountain. I've wandered over it ever since I've been six years old. My father and I will go back with you to the camp."

"Are we far from there?"

"Several miles." He turned to his father. "We are going to walk to the lumber camp. Come, father!" and the father smiled and rose to obey as a well-disciplined child would have done.

"Do you live near here?" asked Margery as she walked by the side of Thomas.

He told her then of the little old mill-house at the foot of the hill. Margery remembered having passed it; she remembered also the frail little woman who sat there with her

head bowed upon the window-sill that day their gay party had driven past. The child had a wild imagination with a highly sensitive temperament and at the mention of the mill-house, she pictured the woman weeping because of this helpless husband, and the boy who would be handicapped all his life because of this trouble.

The father with his bucket of berries was walking along with Isabelle. She had regained her courage and was chattering briskly and asking her companion innumerable questions without waiting for his reply. It was with a feeling of relief that Margery heard her talking lightly. Her face showed her thoughts, and Thomas read them correctly.

"There is no danger," he said. "My father would not harm anyone. He is always kind and gentle as you see him now."

"Was he—was he—always sick?" She knew not what else to call his condition. She could not call him crazy or insane.

"No; he was hurt. It happened when I

was just a little boy.” It was odd that this retiring, quiet boy would speak to Margery as he did on matters so personal, but the two were alike, and in meeting her he met one who would know and understand as no one else, perhaps. He told her of the old home, the father as he had been and his first time out as conductor. Margery listened and said when he had finished, “It must have been very sad, but of course it all has happened for the best.”

“I don’t think so, and my mother does not think so,” was the reply. “What could be better than a good home and a father as my father was? He meant to send my sister and me to school. I was to be a doctor and do a great deal of good. What could be better than that?”

“I do not know,” she said, “but that is because I am ignorant. But my mother says that all things happen for the best for those who would serve the Lord. When you are a man you may see the reason which no one sees now.”

"I wish I could; but I wish most of all that mother would think as you do. Then this would not be so hard for her."

Their conversation was far beyond their years for Margery's over-discipline had given her a serious view of life, and Thomas had been forced to bear responsibilities which nature meant only for older heads. When the story had been finished, they emerged from the wood to a clearer, broader path.

"We are not far from camp. We go straight up the mountain now."

They had not gone far when the searching party from camp met them.

"Why didn't you come back? Your mother's worried!" said Tom Jones.

"She isn't worried any more than we are!" retorted Isabelle. "We were lost and if we had not met these people we wouldn't have been here now." She turned toward Thomas and his father; but they were already out of hearing, making their way down the mountain road.

"Well, it's over now," said Margery, "and we're all happy again."

"You won't be happy long," cried William, delighted to tease her. "Mother had a letter. Suthern came up with provisions and brought the mail. There was a letter from Uncle Doctor. He's coming to camp some day this week."

Margery's countenance fell. "Why are you overjoyed, William? You don't like him any better than I do."

"One thing, if he's horrid, we can stay away from the camp. We'll go in only to eat and to sleep," said Isabelle.

"Marge, you promised to tell us what made him so cranky," said Rhoda.

"I'll tell you this evening when we sit around the campfire. Oh, I am hungry! Have you had dinner?"

"Yes," said William and Thomas together. "But we've saved a lot for you."

"It will be good and hot. Suthern's keeping up the fire," were Rhoda's encouraging words.

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF UNCLE DOCTOR

Although the days were exceedingly hot, the nights on the mountain were chilly. During the day, Suthern, the colored man, chopped huge limbs from the trees and the boys dragged them into the clearing, ready for the campfire. When supper was over and twilight fell the fire was started. The flames lighted up the open space and played upon the side of the camp. These were the only lights permitted and when the larger pieces of wood had crumbled into ashes and only a great bed of hot coals remained, the campers drew near and sat or curled up on the rubber blankets beside the dying embers. This was the time to bake potatoes in the fire or to roast corn wrapped in its many folds of husk. It was the time for ghost

and fairy tales, and stories of romance and adventure, for the world about seemed more the world of dream and fancy than aught else. The pines stood tall and straight like soldiers on duty. The distance was only a depth of uncertain darkness and even on still nights the breezes crooned through the trees.

On the evening following the girls' adventure the elder members of the party had gathered on one side of the fire, discussing matters which would not have interested the children had they listened. The young people, with a basket of potatoes by them, sat on the opposite side of the heap of wood, waiting until the flames died down before they put in the potatoes. The boys were sprawled out on their backs, relating tales of the fish and the hunt, while the four girls, forming a little group by themselves, were growing impatient with the flaming fire.

"While we're waiting for the ashes to be ready," said Isabelle so low that the others

could not hear, "tell us about the Uncle Doctor."

"I will," said Margery. "I'll start from the very first."

"Tell it like a story," added Mabel. "Describe the hero and use words like a novel. It will be so romantic."

Her suggestion was in harmony with the surroundings and the feeling of the little group and Margery accepted it.

"Uncle Doctor is my—"

"Don't begin that way, Start it, 'Once upon a time,' and make it horrible if you must make up a little bit."

"Once upon a time there lived a beautiful young girl named Susan Brenhizer. This girl had an elder brother who was handsome and brilliant. Oh bother! I can't tell it that way. I can't make it a bit like a book-story. Susan Brenhizer! That doesn't sound a bit like a novel. I must tell it my own way, Mabel Wade, or not at all."

"Oh, very well! If you can't, you can't

and nothing more need be said about it. I suggested that way because I thought it would sound better. But go on as you like."

"Uncle Doctor is mother's brother. He is much older than she and when their parents died he was like her father. She would ask permission of him when she wished to go places, and he always gave her money to spend, just like a father. He was very good to her."

"I thought you said he was horrible and cranky! It don't sound much like it."

"I'm coming to that. Mother said that he cared for only a few people but when he cared, he cared a great deal. He went to college and then to a medical school. When he was through with them he practiced several years but he was never satisfied. He was thinking all the time that he did not know enough. When he could not make everyone well, he worried about it. So one day he said he would go to Germany and stay two years and learn how to be a sur-

geon. Mother says she helped him get ready and packed his trunk. She wasn't very old—only twenty—and then she went with him to New York to see him get on the ship. And when they reached the ship, something happened."

"What?" It was Rhoda who was sacrilegious enough to ask the question. The others held their breath in anticipation.

"Crossing the gang-plank before him was a lady and her daughter. The daughter was very beautiful. Mother says she noticed at once that she was the handsomest girl on board the ship. Her name was Lelia Mitchell. Her mother was ill and they were going to Germany to visit the salt-springs. My uncle met her and in six months she was my Aunt Lelia."

"How could she be your aunt? You were not born then."

"You know what I mean, Rhoda. She was then ready to be my aunt when I was born; but I did not come for a great many years afterward. They were in Germany two

years and when they came home they had a dear little baby boy. They had not told my mother one word about it, and when she went to the door, there was her new sister and a nurse-maid with a dear little baby. That was my Cousin Henry, although they called him Harry, for everyone called my uncle, Henry. It would have been confusing to have called them by the same name.

Cousin Harry was like his father. When he was just a little boy he knew the names of the bones. Mother says he would go into the study and open the case which held the skeleton and ask the names of the bones and so he learned them all.

Mother says that Uncle Henry was always laughing or smiling. He is a great big man and if he'd smile now he would be very handsome—but he won't smile. He's what you'd call glum. But at first he was just lovely. Mother says all his patients loved to have him visit them for he cheered them up, and joked and laughed until they almost forgot that they were ill.

When my Uncle Henry saw that Cousin Harry was so bright about books and liked to study bones, he said he would make a doctor of him. So Uncle Henry sent him to a school and he and Aunt Lelia saved money so he could go to Germany.

Cousin Harry was not like many boys whose fathers give them money and never ask how they spend it. Mother says he was a very careful boy and studied hard at his books. He graduated *summa cum laude*, whatever that means. It is something very fine."

"I don't see that your uncle had anything to be grumpy about," interposed Rhoda. "He must have just naturally been cranky and that makes him act so."

"Will you wait until I finish my story, Rhoda Gardner? I cannot tell the end of the story until I finish the beginning and the middle."

"She must work up to the climax," said Mabel as one who was authority on all things literary. "It would be a queer kind

of story if you'd tell the secret right at the beginning."

"He was graduated *summa cum laude*, as I have said, and then went off to Germany. He studied very hard while he was there, but it really was not work for him, for he loved books and study. But after he was there a while he made friends with some young men and then he began to drink a little and then a little more, and after awhile he gambled." Margery's voice grew low as she spoke of these dreadful acts of her cousin. The other girls listened eagerly.

"And all the while Uncle Henry was sending him money and waiting anxiously for the time when Harry would come home and they would work together. But about the time he was expected from Germany, Aunt Lelia died. You can imagine how my Uncle Henry felt, for Auntie was one of the few people he dearly loved. I remember when Auntie died, although I couldn't have been more than five years old. Uncle looked dreadful and mother was almost as bad for

she loved Aunt Lelia and she felt very sorry for Uncle Henry. When he spoke to mother about missing Auntie, he said he would not try to live was it not for his son. "But I have a boy to live for," he said to mother.

"Then Cousin Harry came home and was a physician and had his office with his father. Uncle Henry did not mean to work hard; he planned just to help Cousin Harry. But Harry was home just a little while when Uncle suspected that he was not acting right. He was so heartbroken that he did not know what to do. Then one day a dreadful accident happened and they sent for Cousin Harry. His father telephoned and sent everywhere for him, but couldn't find him, and where do you think he was?"

"Dead," said Rhoda.

"In jail," said Mabel, to whom death would not have been a mystery but a key to a difficult solution.

"Neither! He was in a gambling den, spending all his money! He came home

while Uncle Henry was searching for him. When Uncle Henry came back, Harry was gone; but Uncle knew he had been there. He had taken out Uncle's check book and written a check with Uncle's name."

"That's forgery," said the matter-of-fact Rhoda. "He could have been sent to jail for that. I read of a man who was."

"But Cousin Harry was not sent to jail. He could not be found that day or the next or afterward. Uncle stopped the check and settled it all. He meant to forgive Harry when he came back and have him behave and start over again, but he never came back.

"But later my Uncle discovered that writing the check was not the only thing Harry did. He had taken every one of Aunt Lelia's jewels, even the ring that Uncle Henry gave her when she said she would marry him. He took them all. Uncle Henry thinks he must have sold them that he might gamble with the money. He did not try to trace them, but he declared then

he would never forgive Harry if he came back. He would have forgiven him anything but selling what had belonged to his mother."

"Did he never come back?"

"Never! Uncle always talks as though he never had had a son. You would think that such a person as Cousin Harry had never lived. But from that time he never went anywhere except to the Sanatorium. He had to go there because there was no one else to perform the dreadful operations. When he comes to our house, he never speaks to us children unless it is to tell us to keep quiet. He never smiles and the only person he ever cares to talk to is my mother. But she will not let him be glum with her. She makes him talk whether he wishes to or not and she asks him questions which he has to answer."

A little sigh of satisfaction passed over the group. They loved romance, and this came home to them.

"It doesn't end just right," said Isabelle

after a moment's thought. "I like stories that end happily. I want them to be happy ever afterward."

"Perhaps the end has not come yet," said Mabel. "We don't know what may happen. Perhaps Harry is dead—perhaps he died sorry for what he done, and perhaps he is alive and will come home some day and then his father and he will be happy."

Margery shook her head. "It will never end happily. It will not matter whether my Cousin Harry comes back or not, for Uncle Henry will never forgive him."

"It sounds like a novel. It certainly is very romantic," said Mabel.

Just then an owl hooted afar off in the wood and the echoes answered him. The sound was weird and uncanny and the girls glanced apprehensively behind them. The mountains dark, sullen and foreboding, suggested horrible possibilities.

"We might have been out in that all night," whispered Isabelle, "if that boy

and his father had not showed the road to us."

"And we never stopped to thank them! But yet it was scarcely our fault, for they were off down the road before I knew they had left us. But we must thank them."

"We might go down to the mill-house tomorrow," said Mabel. "I noticed when we passed there what a romantic looking place it was. I should like to meet the people. I shouldn't be afraid although Isabelle says the man is crazy."

"He isn't crazy!" cried Margery stoutly. "Once he was a very bright man and worked and had a beautiful home and then something happened." She proceeded to tell them the story as Thomas had related it to her; but she embellished the facts with coloring from her own imagination until Jim Crissman appeared to them like the prince of a fairy tale.

The story made Mabel more decided about visiting the mill-house.

"You girls should call," she said. "It's the only proper thing to do, and Rhoda and I shall go with you. We'll walk down early in the morning and ride back with your Uncle Doctor."

"We'll *walk* back," said Margery. "You do not know Uncle Doctor or you wouldn't have suggested riding back with him." She raised her voice to address her mother. "May we walk to the mill-house to-morrow and may I ask that boy and his sister to visit us here?"

"Do just as you please," said Mrs. Houston. "But I'm thinking that if you do not fix up the embers and put in your potatoes they will not be roasted before bed-time."

The girls acted on her suggestion. With sharpened sticks they dug little nests in the hot ashes, then laying the potatoes in, covered them over with ashes.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW GUEST

The girls from the camp arose early the next morning and went down the lumber road. They found the mill-house looking like a bit from a beautiful painting, for the woodbine had covered the rough walls and twined about the porch.

Alice was within the kitchen making preparations for dinner. Her husband sat beside her and she talked to him as though he knew and understood. Her love for him had reached out beyond the world of mind and matter and was keeping him in closer touch with those of normal mind than any medical science could have done.

Thomas and Laura were at work in the garden, tying up tomato stalks and transplanting the small lettuce plants. Laura's

face lighted up with joy when she saw the girls enter the gate. She had never had visitors of her own age—indeed visitors of any age were infrequent at the mill-house. She did not wait to greet them, but ran into the kitchen as fast as her feet could carry her, her eyes glowing with pleasure and the flush brought by the unusual experience upon her cheeks.

“There are girls coming, mother! The girls from the lumber camp are coming into the yard! Ask them to stay, mother,” and she was out again before Mrs. Crissman had time to answer.

Thomas had stood shyly at his work until his visitors came to him.

“You hurried away so quickly yesterday,” said Margery, as she came within speaking distance, “that we had no time to thank you. We came down this morning to tell you that we’re very grateful.”

“It was nothing. I chanced to be in the woods. I really did nothing.”

"You walked several miles from your way. Isn't that something?"

Before he could answer, his mother came from the house. She was dressed in her simple frock of dark percale with a bit of white about the throat, and her great mass of hair, in which the white was beginning to show, was coiled about her head as tastefully as though she lived a happy, joyous life in the midst of many friends. Her lips were smiling but her eyes had in them the expression of suffering and the experience of the past seven years had marked her face with peculiar lines. But she smiled brightly as she greeted the girls.

Margery gave a sigh of relief. She had pictured this Mrs. Crissman as a woman with tearful eyes and sorrowful countenance.

"Come, sit here on the porch," she said. "You must wish to rest after your long walk."

The girls accepted the invitation without

a word. They had listened to Margery's story of the boy and the strange man in the woods and they could not associate the woman with such conditions of life.

Her husband came and sat beside her on the porch and as she talked with them, he rested his hand upon hers and smiled up at her as a fond child smiles at its mother.

Laura was shy of strangers, but she was happy that they had come to visit at the mill-house. She hung over the back of her mother's chair and when an opportunity presented itself she whispered audibly, "Mother, ask them to stay all day."

At length the mother answered her, "Yes, Laura, I shall ask the girls to stay until afternoon." She smiled at her visitors as she added, "Will you stay with us? We seldom have visitors. Laura and Thomas would be happy to have you."

"Yes, we shall stay," Margery answered for all. "The wagon will come from town about four o'clock and we can go up on that. My uncle, Doctor Brenhizer, from Dixmont,

is going to camp to spend a week or more with us. We—”

“Look! Something is the matter!” exclaimed Rhoda.

But Thomas was already by his father’s side and Alice turned to grasp both the man’s hands within her own.

“What is it, Jim? What is it?”

The old hunted expression had come back to his eyes. His lips were trembling in an excess of emotion of some kind; great beads of sweat stood upon his forehead. Some portion of his brain was making a superhuman effort to conquer and control that which had been inactive for so long.

“Jim, what is it? Tell Allie! You’re not afraid to tell Allie, Jim! That’s good!” She patted his hands and wiped the sweat from his brow. He drew one long breath and threw out his arms, as one would do who was about to free himself from heavy bonds.

“You know. I said I would tell him. Telluride, Mexico, that’s the place. Poor boy! It made me sick at heart to see him.

One misstep and his life not worth that!" He snapped his finger. His voice had been calm, but now it ran the scale and hung suspended on the highest note. "What was it I said I'd do? Tell me! It was—it was—*tell me!*"

"Yes, Jim, I'll tell you after while. Let us not think about it now. Look at the wild flowers that Laura picked yesterday. Laura, bring your flowers here." She took the flowers from the child's hand and held them up to her husband.

"See how pretty, Jim."

He took them from her hand and looked at them, and then back to her again with a smile. His strange mood had passed. He was as a child again.

Thomas was troubled. He feared such spells. He had read and heard of insane people, and he dreaded lest his father's misfortune should take such a turn.

But Alice viewed the matter in a different light. She believed that her husband's mind was making an effort to regain its old power.

Hope was renewed within her. Something had touched old memories and had roused them into partial life and perhaps if that something were again and again brought before him, the conscious periods would become active and permanent. Jealous of all that was for his good, her mind worked quickly. In an instant she rehearsed each incident of the day which had not been similar to that of many previous days. Never since Jim's illness had she had young girls to her house. It must have been either they or their conversation which had partly recalled him. She would watch and be quite sure.

When he was quite himself again, the girls arose. Margery's eyes were big with feeling. "Perhaps we had better go," she said, turning toward Thomas. "We may have worried your father and we would not like to do that."

"Perhaps so," he said. "I never knew him to talk like that before."

At this Alice turned quickly. "Don't go!

Please don't go!" Her voice had a pleading tone in it which could not be resisted. "I wish you to stay."

"I was afraid we had worried him."

"If you have, it is the kind of worry that will help." She had regained her usual composure. "It is almost dinner time. You young people amuse each other and I will attend to getting dinner." She left them and went into the house and a few minutes later the little group on the porch heard her singing gayly.

At the sound of his mother's voice raised in song Thomas was relieved. Perhaps, after all, this sudden change in his father meant good instead of otherwise. His burden of care fell from his shoulders.

"Come, let us show you our garden," he said. "Laura and I did all the planting. Father spaded for us."

In an instant the girls were from the porch and hurrying down the garden walk. They had been born and bred in the city and gardens were new to them. They examined

each separate plant, exclaimed over the size of onions and lettuce and grew eloquent upon the silken tassels of the corn. When each plant had been looked over and criticized, Rhoda sat down under the shade of the old forest chestnut tree which stood at the end of the yard.

"I did not know how tired I was," she said. "Let us sit here and talk until dinner time. If we don't rest, we'll be too tired to ride home."

They seated themselves about her. Margery was the only quiet one among them.

Rhoda rallied her: "A penny for your thoughts, Marge!"

"Perhaps they are not worth that much. I'm just a little worried. I'm afraid I said something that excited Mr. Crissman. The only thing I said was that Uncle Doctor was coming."

"It wasn't what you said," said Thomas. "He may not have heard a word. He may have been thinking very hard and part of something came back to him."

“Have you always lived at the mill-house?” asked Rhoda. She was not of an emotional temperament and did not relish a tale of woe or sentiment, so she tried to stem both by turning the conversation by her question.

“No, not always,” replied Thomas, not caring to go into details concerning their former home, for he was conservative by nature. But Laura was different. Her face lighted up and she began at once the story of the former home in town. She could not remember having lived there and she had seen it but once since they had moved from it, but her imagination stood her in good need. She told the story as it was and yet wove about it a golden haze of fancy and uncertainty. Her listeners were spellbound, they were having fairy tale and romance at first hand, and they revelled in it.

Laura did not forget the story of the little tin box. Under the magic of her imagination it became a thing of great importance and as worthy of search as the Holy Grail.

When she finished, the silence was unbroken for several seconds. Then Margery spoke seriously and in great good faith, for she yet believed in charms and fairyland. "While you were talking, I found a four-leaved clover. You know what that means?"

Laura shook her head in negation. "No, I don't."

"It's good luck. Whenever you pick a four-leaved clover, you must put it in the heel of your left shoe, and make a wish, and before the moon changes, your wish will come true."

"Really?" Laura's eyes grew big and bright. "I wish I'd known that before. I've often seen them."

"It's true. There's a song about the four leaves," Rhoda declared. "It goes something like this:

"One is for faith,
And one is for hope,
And one is for love, I know.
Then God put the fourth one in for luck,
So search where the four leaves grow."

"I've saved this for you, Laura," said Margery earnestly. "Pick it, and wish that your father could be cured. It will come true."

"I don't believe it!" said Thomas. "Don't do it, Laura. You will only be disappointed. Then you'll feel worse than ever. The doctors have said time and time again that nothing could help him."

"It will not hurt to try," said Laura. "I shall not be disappointed if it does not come true. Doctors do not always know things. Sometimes things happen through luck," and she tucked the clover in her shoe and made the wish. "Now we'll see who is right, Thomas. It won't be long until there's a new moon."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the summons to dinner. When the meal was finished, Alice took her husband by the hand and went out with the children to the shade of the forest trees. She encouraged Margery to talk of matters of the home and the camp, and all the while she

watched her husband to see if he heard or heeded what was said. But he sat as he ever did, smiling upon them when his glance met theirs or when Alice spoke directly to him.

It was late in the afternoon when they heard the whistle of the train in the distance.

"That means we must soon start home," said Rhoda.

"Not for some time. They must drive for several miles from the station here," said Mrs. Crissman. "We can stop the wagon as they pass the door."

"Mother gave me permission to ask Thomas and Laura to the camp," said Margery. "May they come?" She hesitated but a second and added, "and bring their father with them?"

She was surprised with what quickness Mrs. Crissman accepted the invitation. She could not read the elder woman's mind and know the hope that their presence had fostered in her.

"There are the wheels!" cried Rhoda,

springing up. "Listen to them creaking! Suthern must have found an old ice-wagon to drive. Did you ever hear such a noise?"

She moved toward the gate. The others followed. As Suthern turned the curve they signalled him to stop. The one passenger in the light wagon was a man far past middle age, portly of figure, and stern of face. He had planted his cane firmly upon the floor of the wagon, and was leaning heavily upon it. He gave a sudden start when Suthern stopped the horses, looked quickly about him to see the reason for this, saw the children, and without a word of greeting, resumed his position.

The people of the mill-house came close to the wagon, and the girls clambered in as well as they could without assistance, for Suthern was needed at the reins. Amid the chatter and laughter, the good-byes, and promises of a return visit, the father leaned forward suddenly, and grasping Doctor Brenhizer by the arm, tried to speak. His

face twitched; his mind made a desperate struggle to emerge from the darkness which surrounded it. At last he jerked out a few disconnected, meaningless words.

“Old bones—the case—old bones. You know! What must I tell you? Bones—bones—”

“Drive on, Suthern,” said Dr. Brenhizer, pushing the man’s hand from his arm. Then he added, as though to himself, “The man is crazy. Shouldn’t be let loose. He’ll harm someone.”

The drive up the mountain was an unusually quiet one. The girls sat flat on the bottom of the spring wagon and were jolted about from side to side whenever the wheels struck a stone. Under ordinary circumstances they would have expressed themselves audibly. But now with Uncle Doctor before them, they kept silent, expressing their displeasure with grimaces and muscular contortions.

Margery alone appeared unconscious of

jolts and bumps. A new idea had come to her, and her mind was engrossed in forming plans in which she meant her grim uncle to take an active part.

CHAPTER VI

MARGERY WAGES WAR WITH UNCLE DOCTOR

The children of the camp were impressed by the presence of the grim, silent man, who had no word for anyone. When they laughed heartily, or carried on a discussion, all speaking at once, and with the full power of their lungs, he gave them a look so severe that they became still as mice, and scampered away beyond his ken.

But for the greater part of the day, he was absorbed in his own work, and paid attention to nothing else. But even this had the effect of suppressing the joyous spirits of the young people, to whom Uncle Doctor's work was gruesome. Each evening at dusk he walked a short distance into the woods, where he set traps for any animal which could be caught. The first morning he came

in with several jack-rabbits and one trembling chipmunk. These he penned up and fed on a special diet for several days. So far the children looked on and enjoyed his science. But when he fed poison to the biggest rabbit and stood by watching it suffer, before he administered an antidote, they were ready for revolution. It was nothing to them that he counted the experiment a great success, and took down notes in his tablet which later would add to the skill of the medical fraternity. But it was even worse when he took the chipmunk, his case of knives, and bottles of ether far into the woods and worked alone. He brought the poor little animal back with its head bandaged as carefully as though it were a person. Although he made it a bed of soft cotton, and kept the bandages moist with medicine, and fed it several times a day with ground nuts, and bread moistened in milk, the children could not forgive him. They gave him and his experiments a wide berth.

Whole days passed without their being in his presence. Gradually it became the custom that the younger people sat at the table alone for their meals. Mrs. Houston waited for Uncle Doctor and ate with him. She did not mind his taciturn, gloomy words and talked to him in her sharp, keen way and forced him to reply to her. His sister knew and appreciated him as no one else could do and she was like him, in that she loved few people, but loved them intensely. She knew what had gone from his life with both wife and son. It made it harder for him that he could speak of them to no one, not even his sister. He kept the sorrow and shame walled up in his own heart and gave himself to scientific work as though that was all life could hold for him.

Sometimes when he worked alone, experimenting with operations upon the different animals, the grim, hard look left his face, and he became only a broken-hearted, broken-spirited man. No one seeing him then

could have feared him. Only pity could have filled the heart at the sight of this crushed, subdued old man.

Thomas and Laura, with their father, visited the camp the day following that on which the girls had been guests at the mill-house. Alice had sent them forth with fear and hope struggling for supremacy. Yet nothing out of the ordinary had taken place. Dr. Brenhizer had not been near the camp, being interested in his work in the depth of the woods.

Several days passed before Alice again suggested to Thomas that the three should walk up to the lumber camp. Seven years with their innumerable disappointments had not robbed her of hope. She watched the three set forth, Laura dancing along as airy and care-free as a butterfly, Thomas following more slowly, and the father, more of a child than either of his children, pausing along the road to pluck flowers.

The hope in her heart made her young again. She went back to her sewing, and

sang as she worked. She had long since given up all hope of finding the hidden money. It had always been a minor trouble to her. With Jim well and as he had been before, nothing else could matter. She felt that if he would once more know her and call her Allie in his old, tender, affectionate way, she would gladly toil and slave to the end of life. Unconsciously her voice took up the words of an old song which she had sung in school, years before.

“Every dark night has a morning,

Ho—ho! Ho—ho!

Every dark cloud has a silver lining

We know! We know!

And the day is brighter when it comes

After a night with no stars shining,

And trustful hearts will turn their clouds

Inside out to see the lining.”

She worked all morning steadily without thought of dinner or a moment to rest. She might have gone on all day had not the

splashes of rain upon the porch roof startled her from her day dreams.

"Raining! I must see about the peeps," she said, and went out to put the newly-hatched chickens under cover.

All morning the young people were having a glorious time at camp. They had staked out what they called Indian reservations and, dividing themselves into two tribes and painting their faces with the juice of berries and leaves, had carried on Indian warfare.

Jim Crissman sat on the great stone and watched them. It was impossible to know if he grasped the idea of their play, but he was contented there and smiled whenever his glance met one of theirs.

"There!" exclaimed Rhoda. "I knew it would rain. I felt a great drop. Let us run for the cabin."

The rain was pattering like hail about them. Seizing his father by the hand, Thomas ran with the others to the camp.

"Your mother has a nervous headache and

you're not to disturb her," said Suthern. "She's lying down in the lobby, and is not to be called until dinner time."

"Then we'll sit out under the canvas porch and tell stories," said Margery, leading the way. "It will be better fun, anyhow. I love to watch the rain if it doesn't lightning."

"Let's have riddles and stories," said Isabelle, seating herself on the half log which served for stools.

"Let's tell love stories. The kind you read in novels. They are always so romantic," said Mabel.

At this Rhoda sniffed the air with disdain. "Nampy, pampy stories like that? They weary me! Let's tell ghost stories or Indian stories."

Tom Jones stretched himself face upward on the rocky earth. "That suits me, Rhoda. Someone give us a good Indian story."

"Suppose you start one yourself," said William.

"All right. I got this from a history of

father's. Of course, I can't tell it as it was there. It was too short and dry. I'll embellish it a little."

He began the story which he garnished with midnight raids and much scalping. His hero fairly swam in gore. Isabelle and Mabel shuddered; Rhoda worked up a good show of interest as she always did in whatever pleased the boys; but Margery heard no word of what was being said, for her mind was busy with matters of moment.

The rain was pelting down. Uncle Doctor had been driven in from the woods. He was drenched to the skin, and entered the camp to change his clothes. He had come in from over the higher point of the mountain and entered the camp by way of the kitchen, without the children seeing him. Each had taken their turn in story-telling and Mabel finished with a particularly doleful tale.

"That was too bad," said Isabelle when Mabel concluded. "I'm sorry it did not turn out better. I like my stories to end

so that everyone lives happily ever afterward."

"But anyway it all happens for the best," said Margery, sagely. "Whatever happens, happens for the best for those who try to live right."

"Nonsense! Nonsense!" exclaimed a gruff voice back of her. "That's the biggest falsehood that history has ever handed down to posterity."

They started suddenly at the sound of Doctor Brenhizer's voice. Margery's heart was quaking, but she had enough of her mother's spirit in her not to permit this attack upon her beliefs. She got upon her feet and faced squarely about that she might look her Uncle Doctor in the eye. "It's not a falsehood!" she said stoutly. "It is true. My mother says it is true and she knows."

"Cant and bigotry!" was his response as he came from the doorway out under the canvas roof.

At this, Jim Crissman arose and approached the doctor. The muscles of his face were working like a man in convulsions. He laid his hand upon the doctor's arm. "Number Ten was just passing when he told me about the bones." He laughed gleefully. There was something horrible in the mirthless sound. "It's all come back. I couldn't remember before. The box of bones. You know where to find the box of bones? Don't you? Open up the old fellow's bony head. I knew you would know if I'd tell you. I'm glad I didn't forget. I *did* forget for awhile."

Dr. Brenhizer had stood silent while this was going on. When Jim had finished, the doctor pushed his hand away, and turning to Thomas, said, "You'd better take your father home. If he acts in this way, it isn't safe to have him about."

"He never acted this way before," cried Laura. "It's only when he sees you that he acts so. But you'd make anyone nerv-

ous just to look at you.” She glared at him like a little fury.

“Tut—tut, child! Don’t show the same traits! This giving up to fits of anger might effect your mind later.”

Thomas had said no word, but, arising, had taken his father’s hand and moved down the old camp road toward home. Laura, after she had given expression to her feelings, of necessity followed.

Tom and William were moved by the scene, but, rather than make a show of their emotion, slipped off through the woods, heedless of the dripping boughs of the trees.

Margery was both angry and touched. She was not afraid of Uncle Doctor now. She had answered him sharply and he had not stricken her from the face of the earth; therefore she was ready to take the same risks again.

“The man’s crazy,” said Doctor Brenhizer. “He should not be allowed to roam about. He will harm someone.”

"He isn't crazy!" retorted Margery. "He's always quiet and happy until he sees you. You excite him. That's why he acts so."

"Just so, my little niece," he replied. "What you say is all the more proof of his being unsafe. If he takes queer notions without reason about one stranger, the same thing may occur again. He will do someone harm. I shall make it my business the next time I go into town to report him to the authorities as a dangerous person."

"Don't you dare to do it!" she cried. "You make everyone unhappy about you, just because you are unhappy yourself. You think that poor man is contented, and you'd make him and his children miserable." She looked straight into his eyes without flinching. She was not afraid of him or anyone and she would defend her friends against the world.

Doctor Brenhizer looked at her grimly until she had quite finished her angry speech. Then he said lightly, "Tut, tut, it's

not seemly for a little girl like you to speak so to her elders. Your mother was not brought up that way," and walked on into the camp, while Margery, yet angry and defiant, retorted, "It would have been better if she had!"

The little storm cleared and at the table the children were as happy and light of heart as before. Dr. Brenhizer and Mrs. Houston did not appear until the meal was finished and the children from the room.

Margery knew that her mother and Uncle Doctor had their heart-to-heart talks over the tea-cups. She was disquieted, fearing that her mother might be persuaded to forbid further visits between the mill-house and the camp, for she knew how her mother loved and respected Uncle Doctor.

Determined that her mother should at least hear the truth of the Crissman family, she left her young friends and joined her mother and uncle at the table.

They were discussing Jim Crissman's condition when she slipped in and sat down

on the bench beside her mother. Neither of the elder people paid any attention to her, and she sat without comment until her uncle had finished. The whole gist of the story was that Jim Crissman was a dangerous character to have at large. Mrs. Houston tacitly agreed with him.

"I did not realize his condition or I surely would not have allowed the children to ask him to come here," she said.

At this point Margery took part in the conversation, explaining in terms not complimentary to the doctor that it was Uncle Doctor alone who caused him to be so erratic, and that he was quiet and lovely at other times.

To this Doctor Brenhizer replied as before, "Tut, tut, child, you don't know what you are talking about! Leave such matters to older heads than yours."

"I do know what I am talking about! I think you would sit quiet, too, if you were hit on the head with a stone. I think you would try to help him instead of planning

to make his children and his poor wife unhappy."

"Margery, Margery, you are speaking too hastily! Keep quiet," said her mother.

"What does the child mean?" asked Doctor Brenhizer, turning to his sister.

"Nothing at all, as far as I know. Some of Mabel Wade's romantic ideas, I fancy."

"No, mother, really. Mabel has nothing to do with it. I heard the story first. Let me tell it to you and Uncle Doctor just as Thomas told it to me." She leaned eagerly forward; her eyes grew bright and her cheeks flushed. She grew quite eloquent in her girlish way, as she told the story of Jim Crissman's promotion, the report about the bank, the hidden money, and his first trip out.

This was news to Mrs. Houston. As she listened, she glanced from time to time at her brother as though to read what he thought of this story; but Doctor Brenhizer's face was grim and it was impossible to tell whether he were really listening.

“Now, Uncle Doctor,” she exclaimed as the story of Jim Crissman was finished, “you will cure him while you are here, won’t you? I meant to ask you that first day you came.”

He arose from the table, stepping over the long bench which served the purpose of chairs. “Tut—tut, I’d have my hands full of such cases if I’d undertake to help every one which is brought to my notice.” He took up his instrument case, and had started out for the woods before she had fully recovered from her surprise.

CHAPTER VII

DIFFICULT HOURS FOR ALL

At the mill-house Alice was worried and anxious, questioning herself if she had done the best for her afflicted husband in sending him among strangers. The only comfort she permitted herself was found in the thought that she had done what she thought was best. She had had a happy day until she saw the children and their father coming home, but at the first sight of them she knew that all was not as usual. Laura was nervous and excited; Thomas was silent and distressed; while the father, walking between them, was talking rapidly. His cheeks were flushed and his eyes frenzied.

Alice walked down to the gate to meet them. Thomas lifted his sorrowful, pleading eyes to hers, but gave no explanation.

He had decided that he would not tell his mother about Doctor Brenhizer's saying that his father was dangerous, and should be shut up. On the way home from camp, he pledged Laura to promise not to worry her mother with that.

Alice went up to her husband, and laying her hand upon his, said in her gentle, affectionate manner; "I'm glad you're home, Jim. Did you have a lovely day in the woods?"

He gave no answering, confiding smile to her words, but he pushed her hand away and cried out, "Why don't you tell me what it was I was to tell him? You know I was to tell him and I cannot remember."

"Yes, Jim. I'll tell you bye-and-bye—after we eat supper. It is quite ready for you. I knew you and the children would be hungry." They had come to the door of the house and paused, waiting for him to enter. But instead he sat down in the doorway, and, burying his face in his hands, muttered and talked to himself about trying

to tell what it was and no one would help him. The children were trembling with fear, but their mother was as calm and serene as ever. She smiled at them as placidly as had been her habit. "Come, children! You must be tired and hungry. Eat your supper and slip off to bed."

Then to give them confidence and to show that she had no fear in her heart, she sat at the table with them and forced herself to eat, although the food stuck in her throat, and her heart was heavy within her.

When they had finished, she gathered up the dishes, preparatory to washing them. "While mother is doing this work, you had better get a basin of water, Thomas. You and Laura must wash your feet before you go to bed."

"Must I, mother? I'm so tired."

She looked down at the dusty, mud-stained feet and legs, which unshod had traveled the mountains all day. She laughed gayly as she answered, "Would you go to bed with such dirty legs, Thomas?"

He got up and went out to the well to draw the water. Laura followed him and they sat on the well-curb and splashed the water about, and forgot for a time their worry and fear, just as the mother knew they would.

When she had seen them safe in bed, she came out to the door and sat beside her husband. She had the little scrap of paper which she had taken from his hand that day of the accident; but she kept it from his view, waiting a favorable opportunity to bring it to his notice. He had been quiet for some minutes, but at her appearance he began the broken talk about not knowing and her not helping him to remember.

“Why don’t you tell me—tell me what I was to say to him?”

“Was it this, Jim—*Telluride, Mexico?*” She laid the crumpled paper before him.

“That’s it—that’s it!” he cried excitedly. “Now I’ll tell him! Now I’ll tell him!” He paused and looked vacantly about him. “What was it I was to tell him? Oh, what

was it? What was it?" He buried his face in his hands, talking meanwhile and asking what it was he should tell.

Alice sat quiet and seemingly unmoved, while she watched and listened. She could bear seeing him suffer more than this; she would willingly go through all this trouble again if she could arouse his benumbed brain into activity, and see him as he had been before.

The night had come. They sat in the darkness while he struggled to bring his mind under control. Several hours passed in this way when his tears fell upon the hand she had reached forth to caress him.

"What is it, Jim? Tell Allie about it."

"I don't know what it was. I can't tell anyone," and he sobbed over his trouble as a child would have done.

"Don't try to think about it, Jim. It really does not matter if you tell him or not. Perhaps he knows."

"Can't you tell what it was?"

"No; I can't, Jim. Allie is very sorry

but she cannot help you. Come to bed and rest. To-morrow may make it right."

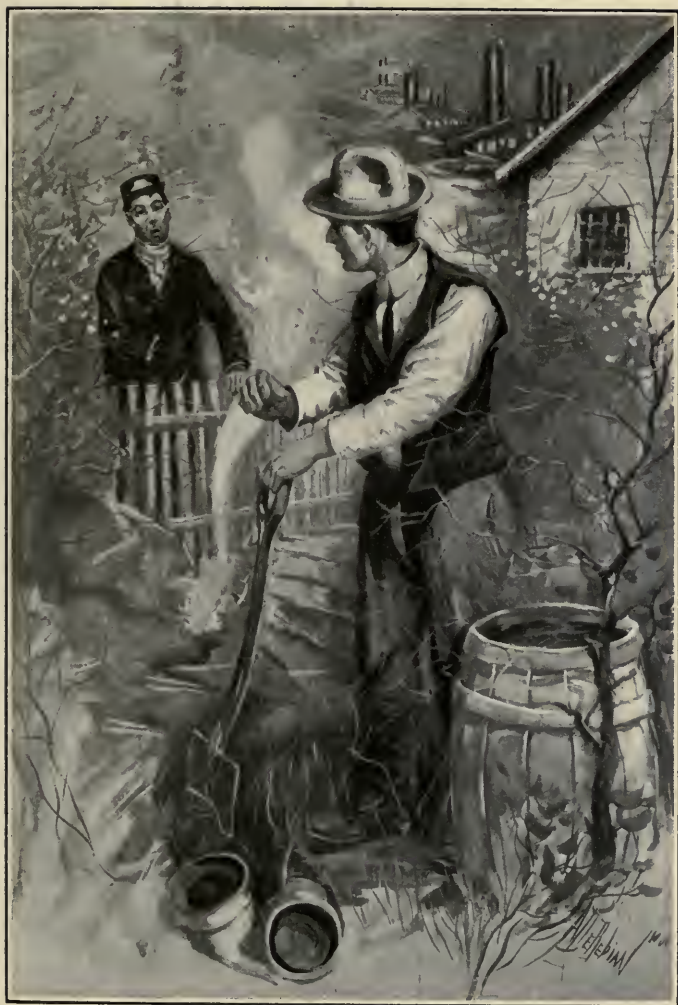
She arose and passed into the house, and he obediently followed. He fell asleep soon after going to bed, but tossed about and talked. She sat by his side until he grew quiet, and only when she thought that he was sleeping soundly, she allowed herself to rest.

She had scarcely fallen asleep when she awoke with a start. Jim was standing in the middle of the room with a lighted lamp in his hand.

"What is it, Jim?" she asked, making an effort to keep both surprise and worry from her voice, lest it excite him. His manner and voice were rational as he answered her, "I'm looking for that red tin box."

She gave a start of surprise. For one instant she believed that his memory had returned, and that he was only confused by his new surroundings.

"A red tin box. It had some diamonds in it. I cannot think where I put it. I



“Hey, there, Crissman, you’re called for Sixty-five
on time!” (See page 273.)



think I know where. It was in the empty skull of a box of bones. That's where it is. Now I must look for the bones."

"I will help you, Jim. But it is too dark now to see well. Let us wait until morning. Then we'll look. Go back to bed and sleep until to-morrow."

He looked at her intently. "Why, I didn't know who you were. But I know you now."

Her heart stopped beating. For a moment she held her breath. If he could call her Allie but once, she believed she could be happy.

"Who am I, Jim?" she asked softly.

"You? Why, you are the operator at the O. K. office. I know that. Didn't you just hand me my orders? That's Number Ten now turning the curve. She's running late. Kimball's firing and we'll pull out of here in a few minutes."

"Go to bed, Jim, and sleep," she said, pushing him toward the bed. He obeyed her now for his old mood was upon him.

She put out the light and sat by him all night, lest he should slip from the house without her knowing where he had gone.

The spirit of disturbance seemed to be in the air that day and night. Up at the camp on the mountain, Margery Houston was acting as never before. She had quarreled with her guests until they had gone off and sat by themselves; she had fussed with William until blows almost passed between them, and when her mother had reprimanded her, she had replied curtly. They looked in surprise at the gentle, sweet-tempered Margery.

"Go into the lobby, Margery," said Mrs. Houston. "Stay there by yourself until you can be with the others without quarreling."

Downcast and miserable, Margery obeyed. Entering the lobby, she threw herself face downward across her cot and sobbed her anger away.

A few minutes later, Mrs. Houston

slipped in and knelt by Margery's side. "Tell mother all about it," she said. "What has happened?"

"It's all Uncle Doctor," she replied. "I always want to quarrel when he's about—but I did think he would be noble and generous if he was glum and silent. From the first day when I met the Crissmans, I felt sure that Uncle Doctor would make their father well. He could, if he wanted to, but he's selfish and cruel."

"Don't think about that, Margery. Perhaps Uncle Doctor is not so unkind as you think. He may know that nothing can help that poor man. There are some cases which no doctor, however skilled he is, can help."

"But he could *try*."

"But he may know that any attempt would be useless. It would be cruel to make the poor man suffer when no good can possibly come of it. You are only a little girl yet, Margery, and do not always see matters in the right light. Leave such matters to older and wiser heads."

"But I did so want to help them!"

"I know you did, dear. Your wish and effort shows a loving little heart; but for this time believe that Uncle Doctor knows best. You have done what you could in telling him about this poor, afflicted man. Don't worry longer about it. Come out and sit by the campfire. Suthern has roasting ears in the husks. We'll put them in the coals to-night."

"I'll come in a few minutes, mother, after I bathe my eyes. I do not wish the girls to know that I was crying."

"Very well, Margery." Mrs. Houston left the lobby and joined the circle of older people about the campfire. A few minutes later Margery came out and buried her troubles in the delight of making hot beds of ashes for the corn roasting.

Uncle Doctor was the only one of the campers who was not beside the fire as the stories and laughter passed gayly from one to the other. He had left the supper table and gone into the woods, as was his habit.

But his trap and snares did not usually keep him long. He had always returned before night had settled. But this evening he was troubled. He wished to be alone with his thoughts, so on his return he stopped within a short distance of camp, and seated himself on the rocky ledge which overhung the brow of the mountain. He could catch the reflection of the campfire but no sound of life from the cleared space below came to him. The darkness and silence fitted in with his thoughts, which were gloomy and depressed. His life had not been a festive one. There had been years of hard work and self-denial to fit himself for his profession, yet he had been both contented and happy at that period. The years when his wife and boy were with him were like bands of gold binding his earlier and later life. The wife was gone. Yet he could have borne her loss without letting it embitter his life, for he had been with her to the last and knew that she was content to go. But his boy! What did he know of him? Perhaps

he was leading a life of crime, putting into the world all the evil which his magnificent mind could conceive; or it might be that he lay in an unmarked grave in the potters' field, or was a wanderer upon the face of the earth. There was gayety and happiness in the little camp below him. How could he take part in it, when somewhere his own son might be freezing, starving or suffering?

His thoughts turned to the poor afflicted creature who had visited camp that afternoon. It was not pity so much as science which caused his thoughts to turn toward him. If what Margery had told him about the man's being hit by a stone were true, the case was quite within his power to reach. He had performed similar operations scores of times and could again. But why should he? This was the question which came to him. Why should he go to the trouble to help this man? No one had turned aside from his work or his pleasure to lay a restraining hand upon his son or to say a word of warning to him. He had come to the

mountain for his own pleasure and rest and did not wish to have either intruded upon. He would not bother with this man Crissman who lived in the mill-house, he made up his mind to that.

He refilled his pipe and, throwing himself on his back on the ledge, looked up into the vault of blue above him. Infinite worlds—universe after universe of souls revolving millions of miles above him—who knew? Science had never reached to the worlds beyond. Man had stopped with that which was just beneath his hand. His knowledge stopped within narrow limits. All he could say of the universe which revolved above him was that he did not know.

But one thing the learned Doctor Brenhizer did know this night as he lay on the ledge and looked heavenward. He knew that he was infinitely small and insignificant—a mere atom in the world about him and the thought did not satisfy him.

He aroused himself. He must get into camp or his sister would worry about him.

He got up and stretched himself, for his limbs had grown numb by contact with the stone. He made his way down the mountainside to the camp. It was an easy matter, for the fire flared like a torch against the sky. He came into the clearing, passed without a word those seated there and went directly to his cot and slept as though the world and its cares touched him not. He awoke at the first glimmer of daylight and at once aroused Suthern, who slept in a hammock swung under the trees.

“Make me a cup of strong coffee and lay out a lunch while I shave, but don’t waken the others.”

When he réappeared, freshly shaved and dressed, his coffee and eggs and bacon were ready. When he had finished his breakfast, he turned to Suthern. “If Mrs. Houston asks for me, tell her I’ve been fed and have gone down the mountain on a little matter of business,” and taking up his great leather case fitted with his delicate instruments, he

went down the old lumber road to the foot of the hill.

Alice was busied with her breakfast—the children were yet sleeping when she saw the doctor come briskly along the road. To her surprise, he entered her gate and came up the garden walk. She trembled with strange forebodings. Her limbs would have refused to move had she not forced them to it. She went to the door to meet him, for if his errand were unpleasant, she did not wish the children to overhear what he might say.

In his brusque, grim way, he brushed past her into the house. "Sit down, woman. I've come to talk to you about your husband. Sit down."

He pushed a rocking chair toward her and Alice dropped in it, all her power of resistance gone from her.

CHAPTER VIII

RECALLED

Thomas and Laura slept until late. By that time the conference between the doctor and the mother was finished. But Thomas saw Doctor Brenhizer leaving the house and go toward town, and his little heart was troubled. He believed that the doctor was doing what he had threatened to do about having the father shut up. He turned away from the upper window and hurriedly finished his dressing. He did not tell his fears to Laura, for he already possessed the manly instinct of saving and protecting her because she was weaker and younger.

His father was sleeping soundly. He went downstairs, expecting to find his mother distressed by the doctor's visit, but on the contrary she was busy with her work

with an eager, expectant air that he had never seen before. She caught him in her arms and kissed him with a fierce show of affection.

"Come eat breakfast at once, sonny. Don't make a noise or wake father. Let him sleep as long as he will, for he was not well last night. Here comes mother's little girl," she beamed fondly upon Laura, who just then entered the kitchen. "Come, girlie, and get through with breakfast. Mother has a pleasant surprise for you both."

They looked up expectantly at her.

"You could never guess it. You are to go into town to spend the day with Mrs. Heiner. Won't that be lovely? She will take you out in the pony cart and show you her flowers and books. You are to go as soon as you can get ready and stay until she brings you home this evening."

Laura was loud in her exclamations of delight, and began at once on her breakfast that she soon might make ready for the visit.

But not so with Thomas. He pushed his plate from him. He was suspicious of this sudden visit. Did it mean that his father would be taken away while he and Laura were absent? He looked up at his mother, his fear showing in his eyes, and she understood his look.

“It is all right, sonny,” she whispered, bending over the back of his chair until her lips touched his forehead. “Doctor Brenhizer has gone to see Doctor Heiner. They are both coming back soon to help father. Doctor Brenhizer believes he can. At least, he will make the attempt. If no good comes from it, your father will be no worse than before. There is one chance of making him well, and I said that they should take that chance.”

His face cleared. He was such a child that his emotions bounded from one extreme to another like a gum ball. He laughed aloud. “We’ll have a fine time, won’t we, Laura? Mrs. Heiner may let me hold the reins and drive, but she won’t let you, Laura.

You're too little! It takes strong arms to hold in a horse."

"I don't want to drive. I'd rather pick flowers and she'll let me wear her string of blue beads while I'm there."

Alice made the children ready and sent them to town. Doctor Brenhizer had promised to tell Mrs. Heiner to expect them. He himself had suggested their being sent away for several days if possible. The presence of children annoyed him, and he did not wish to have them about the house while he was there.

Alice watched them until they turned from the Paddy's Run road into the one that was but a continuation of the main street of the town, then she went to put her house in order. Her husband was at the breakfast table when she went back to the house. He looked tired out after his restless night. She saw to it that he had what he wished to eat and then slipped away to arrange his bedroom.

Doctor Brenhizer had told her what to

make ready and had suggested that she have his room as nearly like that of the old home as possible, so that when he awakened he would not be conscious at first of any great change. When he awakened, if he ever would! There was an uncertainty about that. Yet she did not hesitate to take upon her shoulders the responsibility of the risk. She was doing for Jim what she knew he would do for her were their positions changed. It was her duty to give him the chance of a living life even at great risks of robbing him of life in any form. She changed the furniture about, arranged the window draperies and placed a picture opposite the bed where his glance might rest upon it as it had been in the old home.

It was almost noon when the doctors and nurse returned. Doctor Brenhizer remained without, under the shade of the forest trees, lest the sight of him might excite the patient. Doctor Heiner came in cheery and light-spirited. He sat down for a few minutes in the living-room while Alice

assisted Miss Spangler in making ready the sponges and basins. At last Doctor Heiner spoke to the man sitting near him. "Come upstairs with me. You need to rest. You'll feel fine if you sleep a little."

He arose and held out his hand. Jim laid his own within it and went with the doctor as quietly as a child. When they entered the bedroom, he persuaded him to undress and go to bed, promising that when he awoke he would remember about the box and the diamonds and the bones. And Jim listened and did as he was told. But the instant his head touched the pillow, Doctor Heiner laid the sponge upon his nostrils and lips. A minute later Jim Crissman was unconscious that Doctor Brenhizer and Miss Spangler were removing the pillow from beneath his head and that his bed was being wheeled close to the window.

When the operation had been performed and the room put in its accustomed order, the patient opened his eyes and looked about him. The nurse and doctors were yet in

the room, but he was yet too much under the influence of the ether to grasp what was going on about him. He drank from the glass which the nurse held to his lips and then lay back again on the pillow and slept.

It was too soon to know whether the operation would have the desired results but not too soon to know that the danger of death itself had passed.

Miss Spangler was left in charge of the sickroom. The two doctors talked alone with Alice before they left the house.

"We cannot tell when he will awaken; but you must be there when he does. He must see no strange face. Have all things as nearly as possible as they were the day he left home before the accident. He may not understand that seven years have passed and don't let him know now. Agree with all he says and keep him tranquil and quiet."

This was the gist of the advice they gave her and she realized how important seeming trifles might be in his awakening.

She went into the children's room and taking from the chest the linen dress she had worn the evening before Jim had gone on his trip, she dressed herself in it, though she felt awkward and ill at ease. She arranged her hair in the old fluffy, girlish style of seven years before. Yet in spite of her care, it was not the same Alice who had worn the gown before. She examined herself in the glass. The girlishness had gone from face and figure, yet a new charm had taken its place. Jim might find her different, but perhaps the new Alice would please him even more than the other had done.

The children were to stay with Mrs. Heiner for the remainder of the week. She missed them sadly, yet felt that the doctors were right in thinking that their absence at this time was best both for themselves and their father.

She hovered about the bedroom door until evening. Then the nurse allowed her to

come in and sit by the bedside while she herself rested.

Twilight came and deepened into night. Early in the evening Dr. Brenhizer came in, touched the pulse, listened to the beating of the heart, and gave an exclamation of relief.

Alice was about to arise and light the lamp, but he forbade her. "I'll sit here a while," he said, seating himself in the chair by the open window.

It was past ten o'clock when the patient stirred, moved, and then his eyes fell upon the white figure by his side.

"Why, Alice, are you up and dressed?"

Her heart sprang into her throat and choked her. For seven years, she had been starving to hear him speak her name. She felt like laughing aloud and shrieking for joy, but his welfare was first in her mind, so she controlled herself and said calmly, "Yes, Jim, I've been up some time."

"About what time is it?"

"Somewhere about ten o'clock."

"I thought it wasn't daylight yet. You've kept the blinds down and the room dark so I could sleep. Wasn't the caller here? I stood second out."

"No, he hasn't been here. I suppose he'll be around later."

He made a motion as though he would get up. She laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"You must stay in bed to-day, Jim, or until the doctor comes. You've been sick, you know."

"No, I didn't know. I did have horrible dreams about something. I was trying to talk and no one seemed to know what I said. What was the matter?"

She did not need to answer, for his hand had gone up to his head and touched the bandages. He partly grasped their meaning.

"Been hurt? An accident?"

"Yes, but not serious. You were unconscious. That was all."

"Were any of the other men hurt? How did it happen?"

"It wasn't a wreck, Jim. The train went through all right. You were the only one—"

"I'm glad of that."

"—who was hurt. You were hit by a stone from the quarry."

"It's a wonder there are not more hurt. The first thing I do when I get out of bed is to report that place as dangerous. They have no business to let Huns and Dagos fix a blast. They don't know how to use powder. I'll see that that place is reported at once."

"Yes, Jim."

She did not tell him that five years had passed since a blast had been set off at the quarry. He was quiet for some minutes.

"What day is it?"

"Friday, Jim."

"Friday, and I made my first run on Tuesday. Have I been sick all that time?"

"Yes; but you were a very good patient, Jim. I was with you all the time."

"What did you do with the babies?"

"Mrs. Heiner is taking care of them."

"Did Laura's tooth come through?"

"Yes; she was a little fretful. That was all. But babies generally are with the first tooth."

Dr. Brenhizer stirred near the window. Jim Crissman turned his head but his eyes could not pierce the darkness.

"Who is that, Allie?"

"The doctor, Jim."

"Is that you, Heiner? You've made a nice job of it, keeping me in bed almost a week. But I've the upper hand now, and I mean to get out of here on short notice."

"Nothing will please me better. But this is not Heiner. He couldn't be on hand and I've taken his place."

The patient raised himself slightly in an effort to see the speaker but he could not. He lay back on the pillow again.

"You're a stranger, doctor. I know by your voice. I was raised in this town and I know every man in it. How did you happen to get side-tracked here?"

The doctor moved nearer the bed. "I have friends here and I came up for a time. My name's Brenhizer."

"I wonder if you could be the Doctor Brenhizer who lives over at Dixmont?"

"The very same. How did you happen to hear of me?"

"Some queer things happen. I heard of you for the first time last Tuesday when I went out. There was a young man bumming his way in an empty freight car. I got to talking to him when we waited for orders at the O. K. office. He was in a pretty bad way. He was all worked up over some of the wild things he had been doing."

"And what did he say of me?"

"He said to write to you and tell you that he had turned over a new leaf. He was on his way to join a fellow he had met at school and who was located in the southwest. He said if you wanted to hear from him and it was safe for him to ever come back you were to write to him there."

"He was very thoughtful. Thank you,

Crissman, for delivering the message. The young scamp should not have bothered a stranger to deliver his messages for him. What was the name of the place?"

"I've forgotten. He wrote it down on a scrap of paper. I suppose it's stuffed in my overalls pocket."

"I found it, Jim, and put it safely away. It was Telluride, Mexico, wasn't it?"

"Yes, that's the place. He said if you missed anything at home you were to look in the old bone's head. Whatever he meant by that, I don't know. But those are his very words."

"Yes, I understand. We had a little joke of our own. Thank you, Crissman. I'm going now. You are to do no more talking, but take this medicine and go to sleep or I'll see that you are kept in bed more than one day longer."

He left the old mill-house and went into town. The places of business had been closed for hours and the streets were deserted. He was glad of it for he wished

to meet no one whom he knew and to talk with no one.

He walked the streets until he found the telegraph office from which he sent two messages. The one was to the chief town officer at Telluride, Mexico and read:

"Spare no money to find Harry Brenhizer who left for your town seven years ago. Communicate with father—Henry Brenhizer."

The second was to his assistant at Dixmont. "Search cranial cavities of skeleton in box in home office. Telegraph contents."

After writing the messages, he went to Doctor Heiner where he made his home while in town.

"Our man is all right," he called to Doctor Heiner as he passed his bedroom. "He'll be out in a day or more."

The following morning proved that his conclusions were incorrect for on visiting the mill-house they found Jim Crissman delirious with fever.

CHAPTER IX

THE DAWNING OF THE DAY

There were ten days of suspense and uncertainty concerning Jim Crissman's illness. Then the fever abated and he lay as helpless as a child. But his mind was back as it had been before the accident, and the seven years of his affliction had passed from his memory. If he was conscious of them at all, it was as though they were parts of a half-remembered dream.

Doctor Brenhizer was devoted in his attentions, making frequent visits each day and providing the medicine and food necessary to the patient's recovery. His manner was as brusque and his face as grim as ever, but even Margery was forgetting them when she saw his skill and devotion.

The evening after the second day on which

he had sent his messages word came from his assistant at Dixmont. Its receipt took from Doctor Brenhizer much of the shame he had been carrying for years, for in the cavity of the skull of the skeleton the assistant had found the jewels which Doctor Brenhizer thought his own son had stolen. The son had put them there, of course. Doctor Brenhizer would not ask himself the reason. He was satisfied to wait an explanation; he was not impatient. He had waited seven years without hope for this bit of knowledge. Now a few months would soon pass with hope to bear him company.

When the patient had so far recovered that he observed what was passing on about him, he became conscious that the room was not the same.

"Where am I, Alice?" he asked, letting his glance wander over the unfamiliar walls. "I'm not at home."

"No, Jim," she smiled lightly. "We're down at the old mill-house on Paddy's Run. You remember that?"

"Yes; but what possessed you to come here, the most out-of-the-way place that you could find? And why did you take the trouble of moving at all?"

"For several reasons. Mr. McCormick allowed me to use the place for nothing. The air and quiet were the only things to make you well, and here I can let the children play all day in their dark clothes and not bother with much washing and ironing."

"You are a wise little woman," he replied, reaching forth to touch her hand. "It is a hard enough matter to have me to wait on without dressing the kids in finery. You don't look like yourself, Allie. What's the trouble?"

"I worried about you a great deal while you were ill, Jim," she answered simply. "And the children worried, too."

"The poor kids! You must have a good easy time when I'm able to be about again. You must sit in an easy chair and I'll wait on you. I don't like to see you look worn

out." He was quiet a few minutes and then began on the subject she had been dreading.

"I'm sick to see the babies, Allie. Did the doctor say when they could come to see me?"

"No, Jim. He didn't say a word about it, but I suppose he wants you to be quite strong first. He's afraid they will be noisy and that will make you worse. Mrs. Heiner took them home with her today. She's been so good."

"A little noise would be good for me. I'm dying to see the babies. Couldn't you slip them in just a minute, Allie?"

"No, Jim, I'm afraid the doctor wouldn't like it. He's been so careful and has taken care of you without a cent. He said he was well paid in learning about an accident like this."

"Well, we could have paid him easily enough. We're not beggars even if I can't earn anything for a month. We have

eighteen hundred dollars in the box, you know."

"Yes, Jim. I was thinking of that. I looked about everywhere before we left home, but you had it hidden so well. I thought no robbers could find it if I could not."

"You'd never find it in the house, Allie. I knew you would feel uneasy and look for it and then be worried into fits if you found it. I fooled you that time, Allie."

"Well, where did you put it, Jim? You don't need be afraid of telling me now. Since you've been ill I've quit worrying about such trifles as money."

"You have?" He laughed as he used to do. "Well, then, little woman, I'll tell you. I pried up one end of the flagstones—the first one near the steps and laid the box flat. Then I pounded the stone down, and there it is safe."

"I never thought of looking there. The stones seemed so level."

"So you see we could have paid the doctor his price. Do you know whom he makes me think of? There was a young fellow bumming his way in the freight car the morning I was hurt. The only difference is that this doctor is older and grimmer. I have been wondering if they could be related in any way."

"I do not know." She was glad that he had forgotten what had taken place during the short period of consciousness which had followed the operation.

Each day he asked that the children might be brought in to see him, and each day she put him off with excuses. It was not until he was strong enough to walk from the bed across the room to the window that he forced her to tell him the truth.

"I'm going to see the kids to-day, Allie. If you won't bring them here, I'll walk downstairs. That will hurt me more than having them here. You will bring them, won't you, Allie?"

"In a few minutes, Jim." She came close

and, drawing a stool near, sat down by his chair and held his hands in hers.

“I wished to talk to you first, Jim.” She smiled cheerfully. “How long do you think you have been ill?”

“Well, I really don’t know. ‘A long time from the looks of my bones. A month?’”

“Suppose, Jim, that it was a longer time than that—a year or even more than a year. Would you bear it and laugh over it?”

“I don’t know about laughing over it, but as to bearing it, I’ve got to do that. But surely I couldn’t have been so ill for over a year and not know it. Besides I’d been even more of a skeleton than this.”

“But, Jim, dear, sometimes there are other kinds of illness—when the body is strong.” Her face was growing white and drawn. She felt that she would die rather than tell him. He saw how she was suffering and, forgetting himself, tried his best to reassure and strengthen her.

“Yes, Allie, I’m beginning to understand. What was it?”

"Just your memory, Jim. You forgot me and the children and everyone. You could not say my name."

"Forgot *you*?"

"Yes, but it must have been only my name, for you would smile and seem so happy to be with me."

"How long has it been, Allie? Don't be afraid to tell me. I'll stand it."

"Seven years, Jim."

"Seven years!" he repeated the words softly as though he did not fully grasp their meaning. "Seven years, Allie." He let his head fall back on the pillows of the chair and closed his eyes. Again thoughts of his wife saved him. He turned suddenly to her.

"Was I always with you, Allie? Or did you send me away?"

"Send you away? Why, Jim, do you think I would do that? No, you have never been away from me unless it was that you walked with the children in the woods."

"But, Allie, tell me honestly. Was I

hard to manage? Was I ever unkind to you? I never harmed you, did I?"

"Why, no, Jim. You were always the loveliest, kindest person. You always smiled at me and patted my hand. You never had an ugly look or an ugly word for me. Why, you couldn't be unkind, Jim!"

"I'm glad I didn't make you fear me."

They sat silent, hand in hand for some time.

Then she said, "Thomas is a big boy and has been in school three years. He has been such a comfort to me. Shall I bring the children up to you now, Jim?"

"Not now. Let us sit just this way for the rest of the day. I can't understand it all and it must come back gradually."

So they sat until Alice was compelled to slip away to prepare the midday meal. Doctor Brenhizer came in then and sat with the patient.

To the surprise of both wife and doctor, the patient bore the shock remarkably well.

The next morning he again asked for the children and when they came he talked with them as though the past seven years had not been. From this time his improvement was most marked. When he was able to come downstairs, a little party gathered on the porch, shaded by the woodbine.

Margery, who had come down from the lumber camp to spend the day, was among them; and Alice and the children and Doctor Brenhizer. Jim, lying back in his easy chair, began again the story of the young man who rode that day on the box car.

"I suppose you're the man that boy meant," he said, addressing Doctor Brenhizer. "I meant to send you word. You know why I did not. The fault was not mine. Now perhaps it is too late."

"Not altogether. You told me a good bit a few weeks ago. I telegraphed at once."

"How did you know where? I cannot remember the place. I just glanced at the paper he handed me."

"But your wife kept the paper. As I

said, I sent word to Telluride over three weeks ago."

"And no reply!" said Alice anxiously. "That is too bad."

"I did not say that. I had word in less than forty-eight hours. It was from Harry himself saying that he would come as soon as he could leave a patient. I didn't understand just what he meant; but a letter later told me that Doctor Harry Brenhizer was an honor to the name."

During the following week, Dr. Harry Brenhizer came to the old mill-house and the camp on the mountain top. He was a man—every inch of him, and his father's heart grew young again as his eyes rested upon him for none but a pure, strong man could look as this boy of his looked.

"I'll tell you all about it, father," he said as they walked arm in arm before the mill-house. "Just for one instant I was tempted to take mother's jewels. I meant to pawn them and free myself of debt. But I didn't.

I had them in my hand as I went through the office to go back upstairs for fear I should be tempted again; and as to the check, I did not know what I was doing when I put your name to it. When I came to myself, I did what I could to have it recalled, but it was too late."

They had come up to the door of the mill-house before which Alice and her husband sat, while Thomas and Laura with the young people from the camp were looking over a number of new books which Doctor Harry had brought from town for them.

"There has been seven years of worry and trouble for nothing," said Doctor Brenhizer.

"I don't think so, father," was the reply. "I think it was for something. I could not understand it then, but I think I do now. It was well for me that I had seven years of hard work and struggle against the weakness of my own nature. When I awoke to the fact that I had betrayed my father's confidence, and had reached the place where I had lost control of myself, I was almost des-

perate. I did what I could to cut off from evil, but it was stronger than I was. I was hopeless and almost lost until I found that man is not expected to rely on his own strength. That gave me confidence in myself and my own reform."

"But if you could have stayed with me, or if the word you sent by Crissman could have come to me, there would not have been seven lonely years."

"Yet I say it was best, father. If I had heard from you, I would have been happier, but I also would have been much more easily satisfied. But I said to myself, 'My father is ashamed and grieved; but shame and grief will not come to him again for me.' No, father, it was all for the best for me. It was Jim Crissman and his wife who suffered without recompense."

They were within hearing of the little group before the mill-house. Jim Crissman smiled at the words. "I am not so sure. Perhaps I've been paid for the seven years' run over a sand-ballast and up grade. Alice

and I planned a good bit and knew exactly what we would do for the kids. Thomas was to be a doctor and Laura a fine musician, if she took to it. We had everything cut and dried. We were the whole road and all the departments; but," he looked about him on the faces marked with the experiences of the last seven years. It was difficult for him to express himself about matters which lay close to that great tender heart of his. He had been a railroad man all his life and it was natural that even his religious instincts expressed themselves in terms of the road. It was with the greatest reverence he continued, "but the Lord side-tracked us to show that He had the right of way for awhile."

Alice understood him better than the others. She could not smile at the lightness of his words. She knew how much these seven years had done for her. Her sorrow and responsibility had purified and strengthened her. She was tender, self-controlled, unselfish, faithful. The years had given her

these qualities. What more could she ask of them than that?

These had been seven lean years for the Crissmans, as far as material matters were considered, but they were swallowed up by seven fat ones.

The tin box was unearthed from its bed under the stone, and the money was paid on a little home not far from the old place. Doctor Henry Brenhizer became interested in Thomas and promised that the opportunity for a medical education would be waiting him when he was ready for it.

But best of all—yet Jim Crissman and Alice broke down and cried when it happened—was the day when the sick man was wholly well, and was doing odd chores about the place, and the one-armed caller came to the front fence and cried out, “Hey there, Crissman, you’re called for Sixty-Five on time!”

THE END

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